

KITCHEN

planning & buying guide

SPECIAL ISSUE | APRIL 2015

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708

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editor's note

A friend in the kitchen business



Have you ever been knee-deep in flooring samples or dazed from touring the refrigerator aisle and wished you had someone to turn to for help? Not a designer, but a trusted friend who just happened to have years of kitchen remodeling experience? Someone who could tell you which range

can handle two different dinners on the nights your daughter's basketball team practices until 8 p.m., or who knows which paint is easiest to scrub after a big party?

Well, you're in luck. We can't promise to talk you through a breakup at 3 a.m., but when it comes to making tough remodeling choices, the experts at Consumer Reports are here for you. Our team of pros—engineers who run exhaustive tests on every aspect of the appliances and materials that appear in our Ratings, and editors who turn a real-world eye to the latest design and market trends—has all of the information you need to pick the products that will fit your style, your lifestyle, and your budget.

Our independent evaluations of more than 700 products reveal the truth about performance, features, capacity, and more. You can rely on our reports because we buy everything we test and accept no ads—so our testers can tell it like it is. And our brand-reliability surveys of tens of thousands of subscribers reveal the brands least likely to break.

So, please, lean on us. Consider Consumer Reports your friend in the kitchen business.



See what one of our in-house pros chose for his own home, on page 29.

Amanda Lecky
Amanda Lecky
Special Publications Editor



Hot list

Our experts' takes on the best—and worst—of what's new in the kitchen

TREND WATCH

Color, at any price

As kitchen design trends have transitioned from traditional to contemporary, bold color has made a big impact, adding energy to clean-lined spaces. Our intrepid experts found a rainbow of richly hued appliances—from ranges to toasters—at recent home shows. And a scan of any design catalog or website will reveal lighting, tools, and accessories in an almost endless range of shades. How to choose colorful kitchen products that you won't regret five years from now? Think “replaceable.” If, for example, you're inspired by Benjamin Moore's color of the year for 2015, Guilford Green HC-116, paint a small area—say, the backsplash between the counter and cabinets—in the color. You can always repaint it with next year's color if you tire of it. You could splurge on a \$5,000 pale-green range or indulge in a \$250 stand mixer in a similar shade. Or reduce the risk of regret even further with a few accessories in the must-have-hue, such as a \$15 set of green and yellow mixing bowls.



Aura Satin in Guilford Green, \$68; benjamin-moore.com

Expert tip

Colorful serving platters hung on the wall are another way to add color, plus you're more likely to use them. Stick to one dominant color.

— Daniel DiClerico, Senior Home Editor



Bluestar RNB Series 36-inch Pro-Style Gas Range, \$5,500; ajmadison.com



KitchenAid KSM150PSGA 5-Quart Artisan Series Mixer in Green Apple, \$280; amazon.com



4-Piece Pinch & Pour Prep Nesting Bowl Set, \$15, [Crate & Barrel](http://crateandbarrel.com); crateandbarrel.com



Moen

Expert tip

Pricier faucets aren't better. Look for lifetime warranties on finishes and leak-free operation, then pick a style within your budget.

— Celia Kuperszmid Lehrman,
Deputy Home Editor

Look, Ma, no hands!

Familiar fixtures in public bathrooms, hands-free faucets are finding their way into more home kitchens. The appeal of those “touchless” styles is undeniable: They help prevent the spread of germs by allowing you to wash your hands without touching a handle first, and they save water by providing a stream only when it's needed. Improved designs that include better sensors, battery packs that eliminate wiring headaches, and manual override options have added an ease-factor to the attraction. Prices have come down, too—though one from a well-known brand will still run about \$350.



PORTABLE PIZZA OVEN

The Bakerstone Pizza Oven Box, \$150, is a stone-lined steel box that converts your gas grill into a pizza oven. The manufacturer claims that it's better than a pizza stone, which crisps only the bottom of the pie. We pitted the two methods against each other, and both turned out nice pies. But our in-house taster noted subtleties in the oven-box versions that were more like wood-fire-style pies. The cons: The box is heavy and leaves little room on your grill for cooking anything else. It's also the pricier option; a pizza stone costs only about \$35. Find either at bedbathandbeyond.com.



FANCY FRIDGES

The luxury end of the refrigerator market is having a moment. Brands such as Sub-Zero, Thermador, and Viking are pushing the envelope with options including commercial-style glass doors, flexible “column” sizing, touch-screen control panels, and LED interior lighting. Prices are keeping pace: Sub-Zero's Pro 48 Side-By-Side Refrigerator, above, costs \$16,000. But you can get a feature-packed, super-capacity model for far less: See “Best Big Fridge,” on page 6, for the goods on our top pick.

BEST AND WORST

The winners and losers from Consumer Reports' independent tests

BEST Big fridge

It's not a budget model by any means, but the four-door, French-door Samsung Chef Collection refrigerator, \$5,400, has the most usable capacity of any model on the market (23.4 cubic feet). And it performs like a dream. It was extra quiet, too—a nice perk in open-plan kitchens.



WORST Energy hog

The GE Profile PVSZ1KSESS, \$3,100, costs about \$120 per year to run. That's twice as much as similar models. As a result, the cabinet-depth fridge from GE—which shed its appliance unit but is beefing up its oil and gas business—was dead last in our ratings.



BEST Multitasking gas range

The GE Profile PGB950 SEFSS, \$2,100, is a double-oven range, so you can bake two meals at the same time. This 30-inch-wide model includes five burners—among them a high-heat burner that's one of the fastest in our tests—and a neat center griddle.



WORST Pro-style range

The Verona VEFSGE365SS range, \$2,500, is a sleek Italian import that comes in flashy colors, including burgundy. At that price you'd expect it to do a decent job at basics such as baking and broiling, but it was last in our ratings of 32 pro-style ranges.



BEST Do-it-all dishwasher

In addition to stellar washing, drying, and efficient running, our top-rated dishwasher, the KitchenAid KDTM354DSS, \$1,200, has a self-cleaning, ultrafine filter. It breaks down food particles during the cycle without the noisy grinding that's typical of other self-cleaners.



WORST Energy claim

A leaf-shaped label on the Amana ADB1100AWW, \$300, says it "helps use 39 percent less energy and 65 percent less water." But the small type reveals the comparison to be with dishwashers made before 2006. The Amana was fairly efficient—but nothing special overall.



The best pod coffeemakers from our tests



Mr. Coffee BVMC-SJX33GT, \$40

BEST DRIP MACHINES FROM OUR TESTS

These drip coffeemakers can brew a tastier cup than pod models can, and they usually serve up eight or more at a time. You can also program them to have your morning java ready when you are.

Mr. Coffee BVMC-SJX33GT, \$40 (drip model with carafe). Lets you serve several guests at once from its carafe.

Viaante Brew-N-View CAF-05T, \$140. This 10-cup machine dispenses coffee directly into a cup or mug, so family and friends can serve themselves.

Cuisinart Grind & Brew DGB-700BC, \$150. Like other grind-and-brew models, this one grinds fresh beans without a separate grinder. And also like others, it brings added complexity and more parts to clean and maintain.



Speedy brewing and no-mess convenience have helped pod coffeemakers edge closer to drip machines in sales. More models also whip up hot chocolate and espresso along with an adequate cup of joe. Here's what else we found:

Starbucks makes the grade. A new entry from Starbucks produces a first cup in about 90 seconds and repeat servings in even less time. That helped put its new Verismo 600, \$160, among our top picks. But limited brewing range kept servings on the weak side. As with models that use K-Cups, it won't let you use two pods at once for

a stronger brew. A better bet: DeLonghi's new Nescafé Dolce Gusto Circolo Flow Stop, \$180, which improves on the earlier version with selectable cup sizes for precise water control.

Espresso in a hurry. Unlike most pod coffeemakers, Nespresso's VertuoLine, \$300, is the brand's first that makes espresso in addition to coffee. It forms a thick foam or crema on the brewed coffee, which our staffers liked. The model just missed our picks because of less consistent temperatures from cup to cup, but its foam and the espresso function make it worth considering.

TOP POD MACHINES



Starbucks Verismo 600 (Verismo pods), \$150



DeLonghi Nescafé Dolce Gusto Circolo Flow Stop (Nescafé capsules), \$180



DeLonghi Nescafé Dolce Gusto Genio EDG455T (Nescafé capsules), \$130

SAVE OR SPLURGE?

Kitchen-industry experts share inside tips on the best ways to invest (and protect) your hard-earned cash.

“Buy the best and you only cry once,” says the old slogan. In other words, spending more for quality now may be painful, but over time that investment will pay dividends in performance, design, and durability. This is never as true as during a kitchen remodel, when the choices you make today must hold up to the use and abuse of many tomorrows.

Of course, few of us can afford to buy the very best of everything. So, staying on budget becomes a tightrope walk of saving and spending, prioritizing and compromising. One pro trick to get the balance just right: Begin at the end. Ask yourself how long you’ll live with this kitchen, and how you’ll really use it. Your answers will help you decide how important durability is (very important if you plan to live in your house forever; less so if you’re updating for resale) and which features are the most essential. Then, take the save-or-splurge advice from our panel of pros, whose experience has taught them where it’s best to invest, and which corners can be cut safely.



Materials

SAVE

MIX IT UP. Budget considerations can make stone counters seem out of reach, but it is possible to use the material you want without veering into the red. “Instead of spending thousands to outfit your entire kitchen in exotic granite, just do the island and use something less expensive on the perimeter counters. A small slab of a

basic granite costs about \$600, plus fabrication,” says kitchen designer Tatiana Machado-Rosas, Design Department Manager for Jackson Design & Remodeling in San Diego. Quartz surfacing costs about the same of granite, holds up better, and doesn’t require sealing. Or, use stone in heavy-use areas, but top a dining bar or desk with wood, which can cost far less.

SPLURGE

ADD WINDOWS. Introducing natural light to a dark kitchen can make it seem larger—without an expensive addition—not to mention highlighting views and offering ventilation. If you’re replacing existing glazing with a larger size, remember to factor in the cost of the installation, says remodeler Carl Bruen

of Bruen Design Build in Morristown, New Jersey. “When you make a window taller and not wider, it might cost you \$250 for the carpentry,” says Bruen. “But if you do a wider window, it might cost closer to \$1,000.” Remember that windows take up wall space that can otherwise be used for cabinets, so be sure to allocate enough storage elsewhere.



Appliances

SAVE

KEEP WHAT YOU HAVE. If the existing appliances work well, keep them—for now. But, don't forget to think ahead. "Consider each one and how your layout or cabinets may need to change to accommodate a future replacement," says designer Genie Nowicki of Harrell Remodeling, Inc., in Mountain View, Calif. You

can shave about \$5,000 to \$20,000 off your budget if you eliminate appliance costs, but it's a strategy that works best when you don't plan to change the size of the appliance (for example, going from a 24 to 30-inch wide wall oven). A word of caution: Nowicki says gaskets in an existing dishwasher can dry up while the appliance sits during a renovation, which can lead to leaks.

SPLURGE

GET CABINET-DEPTH FRIDGE. If a new refrigerator is on your shopping list, consider a cabinet-depth (also known as counter-depth) refrigerator, says kitchen designer Liz Murray, owner of Liz Murray Interior Space Planning & Design in Lake Oswego, Oregon. "A big, bulky refrigerator sticking out into

the room takes away from your kitchen and compromises traffic flow," says Murray. Available in a range of sizes and styles, these 24"-deep models align with surrounding cabinetry, creating a built-in appearance for thousands less than a true built-in model costs. Of course, you do sacrifice storage: If you need more, consider recessing a standard fridge into the wall.



Style

SAVE

UPDATE WITH PAINT. Whether your budget is tight or you just want to freshen up your kitchen for resale, embrace the power of paint, says Lise Salmon, a residential broker associate with Decker Bullock Sotheby's International Realty in Mill Valley, Calif. When she worked with a client to give a 1970s kitchen a face-lift to prep the home for sale, they used paint to transform the space. "We decided to keep the cabinets and counters, but refinished

the existing cabinets to a rich brown to match the ceiling beams and painted everything else a neutral creamy white," says Salmon. "This eliminated the visual chaos of the 1970s orange hues, dark yellows and odd wallpaper." The paint updated the kitchen, and the home sold with multiple offers. Painting walls is a simple project that even DIYers with no experience can execute well (see page 68 for our top-Rated paints and tips on getting the job done right), but refinishing cabinets is more difficult.

SPLURGE

CREATE A SPLASHY BACKSPLASH. A beautiful backsplash lends personality, so it's a good place to spend a little extra. But you don't have spring for yards of imported tile. For one project, designer Paula Kennedy of Timeless Kitchen Design in Seattle, used a few pricey Moroccan-style tiles to create a picture-frame effect around basic \$1-per-square-foot subway tiles. "It was a cost-effective way to add a little 'wow' factor," she says.

SAVE

PICK A FRUGAL FAUCET "You don't have to buy the luxury brands to get very good quality and functionality in a faucet," says kitchen designer Sarah Robertson of Studio Dearborn in Mamaroneck, New York. Instead of focusing on the label, consider the construction. All-brass faucets with a low-maintenance finish typically start at about \$150 to \$300; go lower than that and you'll find plastic internal components that wear easily.



Cabinets

SAVE

BUY FACTORY-FINISHED CABINETS. Designer kitchens often include custom-made cabinets, which do have their attractions: They fit the space perfectly, can include nearly any detail you can dream up, and give your kitchen a one-of-a-kind look. But, factory-made stock and semi-custom cabinets often have the advantage of durability, says Gianna Santoro, a kitchen designer with Deane, Inc., in Stamford, Conn. “If you’ve spent a bundle

on new cabinets, you don’t want to see the finish chipping or peeling in a couple years,” she says. “Factory-finished cabinets can save you money up front, and you won’t have to refinish them down the road, so you save twice.” Look for manufacturer that uses a catalyzed varnish (also known as conversion varnish), which creates a durable and uniform finish that will almost always outlast standard finishes applied at the job site, says Santoro. And, be sure the manufacturer offers a warranty on the product.

SPLURGE

MAKE THE ISLAND MULTIFUNCTIONAL.

“Prospective homebuyers love center islands,” says Susan Silverman, a Licensed Associate Real Estate Broker with Warburg Realty in New York City. Especially when they come with extras like storage cabinets, seating, and a prep sink. If you’re upgrading to a larger island, make sure to allow a 42- to 48-inch wide clearance on all four sides so the island won’t impede

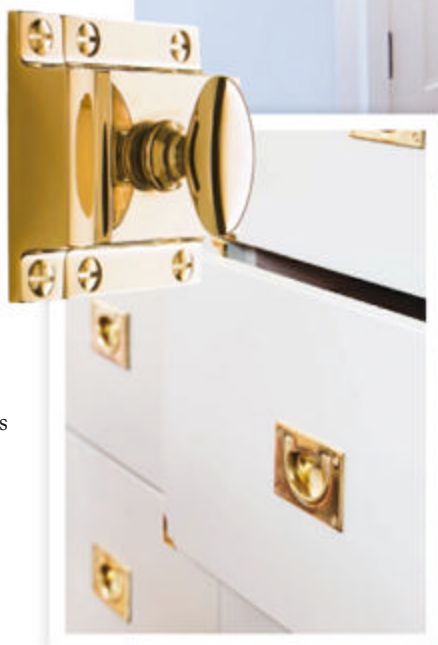
movement. Measure door swings of adjacent appliances to be sure they won’t crash into the island when open. If you plan to add stools for seating, you’ll need to allow for a generous countertop overhang and plenty room from side to side: According to the National Kitchen and Bath Association, island seating requires knee space that is 24 inches wide by 15 inches deep. For open-plan kitchens, consider a two-level design, with the taller counter facing out to hide cooking messes from view.

5 easy updates under \$250

A weekend of work and a (very) small investment can give your kitchen a fresh new look.

Replace the hardware

\$50 Installing new hardware is probably the simplest cabinet update. To avoid having to fill a bunch of screw marks, be sure to measure the distance between the holes after you remove the original hardware, and then choose new styles that match that size. Take the old hardware to the store with you to be safe. There are plenty of places to buy new knobs and pulls, but you'll find bargain prices in the hardware aisle (not the cabinetry aisle) of your local home center, online (try overstock.com) and at Ikea.





Pick colorful accessories

\$125

A few well-placed touches, such as bar stools with bright upholstery, can create a fresh new look, almost effortlessly. Walls and cabinets are another opportunity to introduce color. For easier cleanup in this high-use area, be sure to pick paints with an eggshell finish for the walls and semigloss or high-gloss for cabinets. Check our paint Ratings (page 64) for some smart choices.

A kitchen scene featuring three white open shelves against a white marble backsplash. The shelves are filled with various kitchen items: the top shelf has colorful bowls and a metal strainer; the middle shelf has stacks of plates, mugs, and a yellow bowl; the bottom shelf has stacks of white bowls, a blue ceramic jar, and numerous clear glasses. Below the shelves is a white countertop with a white bowl of fruit on the left, a tray with bottles in the center, and a silver toaster on the right. Under the countertop are light wood cabinets with silver handles. The floor is made of light wood planks.

Hang open shelving

\$100

Open shelves add storage for a fraction of the cost of cabinets. Find ready-made ones at Ikea and Home Depot. Or make your own with brackets and wood. When hanging the shelves, be sure they're level and well anchored. Use a stud finder to be sure you're screwing the bracket or brace directly into a stud.



Use mood lighting

\$180

Choose one prominent location—say, above the kitchen island—and install a show-stopping light fixture, something with a bold color or eye-catching design, like the Kenroy Dervish 1 pendant, \$180, from target.com. Other good online sources: lightinguniverse.com, cb2.com, and lampsplus.com. You might fare even better at craigslist.org or flea markets. Even if you have to pay an electrician to rewire a nonworking fixture, the price might still be right.



BOTTOM: ANDREW BUCHANAN/SLP; RIGHT: ERIKA BIERMAN; OPPOSITE PAGE: THOMAS MCCONNELL



Add an island

\$225

A custom-built island combines style and storage with a sometimes-hefty price. Save by opting for an unfinished or ready-to-assemble island and doing part of the work yourself. You'll find a wide variety of doors, drawers, and countertops in different configurations, starting at around \$150 at sources like unfinishedfurnitureexpo.com, amazon.com, or jcpenney.com. Before you buy, make sure you have enough room to fit the island comfortably; you should have a 36- to 48-inch-wide clearance on all four sides.

Teal

**Try: Kilz Casual
Colors Satin
Scuba D872**

Warm undertones make teal one of the most inviting colors in the blue family. It adds drama—you may want to limit the hue to one wall—but it's easy to live with and to decorate around: Wood tones, neutrals, metallics, and even contrasting brights look great against this sea-inspired shade.

COLOR THEORY

It's easy to give your kitchen a bold new look with fresh paint in a trendy hue (or two).



Greige

**Try: Benjamin Moore
Revere Pewter HC-172**

“Greige” is a made-up name for an endlessly versatile shade that combines gray and beige to create a neutral that’s neither dull nor cold. Use it to create a sophisticated tone-on-tone scheme with darker grays and crisp white for contrast, or as a modern backdrop for a mix of bright colors like the yellows and blues below.



RIGHT: RYANN FORD, OPPOSITE: ERIC ROTH



Medium gray

Try: Behr Pier PPU8-22

Not as dark as charcoal but deep enough to lend richness, medium gray works beautifully in the kitchen. It's a quiet backdrop for eye-catching displays, an ideal complement for stone or stone-look countertops, and an enhancing foil for warm wood tones. If your kitchen includes stainless steel appliances and chrome or nickel fixtures, stay away from blue-based grays, which can look overly harsh and cold when paired with silvery metals.



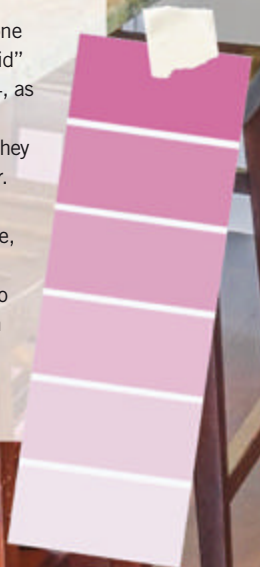
LEFT: SHAYNA ORRINO; RIGHT: BRIAN VANDEN BRINK



Orchid

**Try: Clark + Kensington
Darling 01D-5**

Color authority Pantone chose "Radiant Orchid" as their color of 2014, as an expression of the global design trends they identified for the year. Whether or not you agree with that choice, you'll find orchid to be a delightful color to live with, especially in small, focused doses, like on a kitchen island.



Quick kitchen fixes

Smart DIY ways to turn eyesores into eye candy

Outdated cabinets, scratched appliances, and blah backsplashes are some of the worst kitchen style offenders, but they're also pretty easy to fix. Here are simple solutions—tailored to a range of DIY abilities—from our expert panel: Anthony Carrino and John Colaneri, contractors and hosts of HGTV's "Kitchen Cousins," plus our own in-house home-improvement gurus.



Boring backsplash

"You really get a lot of bang for your buck when you update the backsplash," says HGTV's John Colaneri. "It can transform the whole kitchen," he adds. If you're starting with a bare backsplash—meaning that it isn't already tiled—giving this relatively small patch of space a fresh look is simple.

EASY: Paint

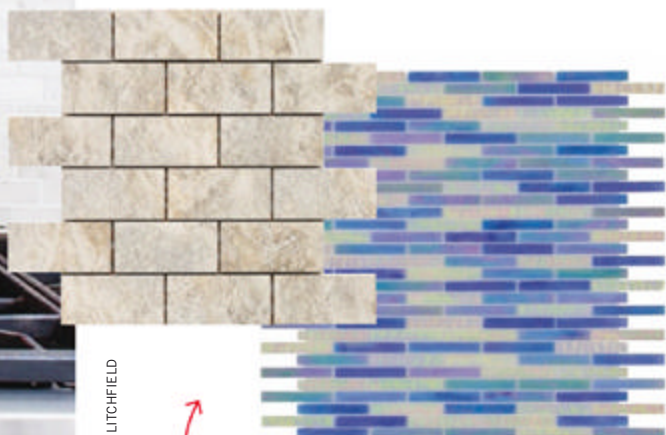
Choosing a bold or contrasting color for the backsplash is probably the most basic kitchen fix-up there is. Go with a high-quality, semigloss paint so that you'll be able to wipe off splatters and stains without worrying about the finish, says our own paint expert, Enrique de Paz. Another option: "Use chalk-board paint on the backsplash," Colaneri suggests. "It's fun to be able to write messages or recipes right on the wall. But this finish does absorb stains more than most, so be prepared to repaint or touch up occasionally."



Buy the Best: Clark+Kensington Semi-Gloss Enamel, \$33, is our top semi-gloss paint.

MEDIUM: Tile

If you're up for a challenge, consider tiling the backsplash yourself. "For such a small area, tiling really isn't that difficult," Colaneri says. He recommends buying tiles in 12x12-inch mesh-backed sheets. (Prices vary by type of tile, but you can find options starting around \$12 to \$15 per sheet.) "When you buy a sheet of tile, the work of spacing and leveling the rows of tile is done for you, which makes the job even easier," he says.



Buy by the sheet: Shown from top: Elida Ceramica Ocean brick mosaic indoor/outdoor wall tile, \$16 per square foot; Style Selections Floriana Heather glazed porcelain mosaic subway wall tile, \$8 per square foot; lowes.com.

OPPOSITE PAGE: SEAN LITCHFIELD



Resurface:

This \$150 kit gives you all you need to redo 30 square feet of countertop.

Tired countertops

Because they generally take up a lot of real estate, new countertops can make a big impression and give your entire kitchen a fresh look. But you can't just pick up a paintbrush and cover imperfections; you have to make sure that the surfaces are durable enough to stand up to real-life use and abuse. There are some easy and inexpensive ways to get a new look without breaking the bank.

EASY: Replace the whole shebang

Once you've spent some time at the home center choosing your new countertops, your work is over. Simply schedule the installation and get ready to enjoy the fruits of your "labor." At \$10 to \$40 per square foot, including installation, laminate is a budget-friendly option. (Laminate also comes in lots of surprising styles, including convincing "marble" and "granite" designs.) If you have more to spend, consider more durable quartz, which is \$40 to \$100 per square foot, including installation. Our tests have found that it's even more durable and stain-resistant than granite.

MEDIUM: Refinish

You can refresh the surface of worn laminate counters that are sound by using Rust-Oleum's Countertop Transformations kit. We tried it and found that the result looks very similar to new laminate (if you don't look too closely!). The surface is heat- and stain-resistant, but it can't withstand cutting or heavy impacts. Here's how it works: First, use the kit's sander to remove the gloss from an existing countertop. "This requires a lot of elbow grease, and it's difficult to do a good job in the joint between the counter and backsplash, or on curving surfaces such as bullnose and ogee edges," says Bernie Deitrick, who tested the product. Then to create a stone look, brush on a sticky base coat and sprinkle it with multicolored chips. One caveat: Sanding the chips to a smooth surface isn't easy. To see whether you're up to it, check out the video at [youtube.com/watch?v=mnON172We0g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnON172We0g).

Ugly cabinets

Cabinets have a huge impact on the look and function of your kitchen. But they're usually the most expensive element in any update, gobbling between 35 and 60 percent of the total budget, according to the National Kitchen & Bath Association. If your cabinets are structurally sound and you're not ready to invest many thousands of dollars on new ones, consider a cosmetic redo.

EASY: Replace hardware

Changing the knobs and pulls is the quickest—and often the cheapest—fix. New hardware starts at a couple of dollars apiece, though it can cost \$50 or more for a large handmade handle. Just be sure to take the old hardware with you when you shop for replacements, Carrino says. You have to make sure that the screws on the new knobs and pulls are correctly spaced for the existing holes in your cabinets. “Otherwise, you’ll have to deal with wood filler and drilling new holes,” he says.



Shown from top: Mulholland 96mm pull, \$6; Alison Value Hardware round knob, \$2; Advantage 3-inch solid brass pull, \$13; Amerock, amerock.com.



MEDIUM: Organize interiors

New kitchen cabinets have loads of great interior organizers, including slide-out shelves and lazy Susans. But you can also find an equally large selection of install-it-yourself systems at home centers—no new cabinets required. Adding those features to your existing cabinets isn't a complete no-brainer; you do have to measure carefully, check that the cabinets are level (most important for lazy Susans, which won't spin properly if they're not level), and know your way around a drill and a screwdriver. Prices start at \$50 and vary depending on material and size.



Store more: Tap wasted space between shelves. Shown: Elfa Easy Glider, starts at \$40, containerstore.com.

CHALLENGING: Paint inside and out

Taking a paintbrush to good-condition cabinets is the least expensive path to a dramatic transformation. It's also the most labor-intensive route if you plan to do the work yourself. “You have to remove all the doors; clean, degrease, and sand all the surfaces—then paint,” Carrino says. “It's a ton of work, and your results may be less than professional-looking.” If you decide to spend your weekend painting, use two coats of semigloss paint, recommends de Paz. Or hire a pro. For around \$2,000 for a small- to medium-sized kitchen, the painter will spray the units, creating a smooth, even finish.

Awful appliances

If you can't replace your dingy, scratched models with gleaming stainless-steel beauties, you can camouflage flaws. Or if your appliance is too far gone to patch, you can even paint the old finish in a new color, including stainless steel, for a more contemporary look.

EASY: Patch scratches

For small imperfections or scratches, try an appliance touch-up kit. The kits cost about \$5 and come with a small nail polish-type brush that makes it easy to apply a small amount of finish onto problem areas.



MEDIUM: Paint exteriors

You can hire a service to do this for you or go the DIY route with a spray paint made especially for use on metal appliances, about \$17 per can. Good ventilation and careful prep is key, taping off areas you don't want painted and sanding parts you do want painted so that the paint adheres better. Spray very thin coats, moving your arm continuously as you spray, de Paz says.



Spray chic: We used Rust-Oleum Painter's Touch 2X in Satin Lagoon to make over a dishwasher.



Dull floor

You don't have to live with less-than-lovely linoleum, worn-out wood, or dated vinyl—or pay to have it ripped out and replaced. Depending on your skill level, you can install a brand new floor on top of the old one or give the floor a new look with paint.



Durable pick: Marine paint is easy to apply and great for high-traffic areas.

EASY: Paint it

If you have a wood floor and don't want the mess and expense of pro refinishing, consider painting it. For the most durable solid finish, use a marine paint (about \$26 per gallon), which is tough and water-resistant. "You'll need to use a respirator when you use this oil-based paint," Carrino says.

MEDIUM: Whitewash it

For a clean, beachy look, dilute regular latex paint with water—a 2-to-1 paint-to-water ratio is best, Colaneri says. Brush it onto a sanded floor, a small area at a time. While the paint is wet, use a clean, lint-free rag to work it into the wood, leaving a transparent "wash" that accents the pattern of the grain.

CHALLENGING: Cover it

To change a cruddy floor that's level and sound without ripping it out, a "floating" floor is your best option. It consists of tongue-and-groove planks or tiles that lock together; just lay them over the surface. But it takes some DIY skills, says our flooring tester, John McAloon. "You have to be able to cut vinyl with a knife or to use a saw to trim wood or laminate planks," he says. To allow for mistakes, buy 10 percent more material than you think you need.

Top floor: Armstrong Coastal Living White Wash Walnut, \$3.50 per square foot, is a laminate floor that did great in our tests.



Entertaining, eating, hanging out, and—yes—cooking: Today's heart-of-the-home kitchens are made to multitask.

The ever-popular open kitchen has evolved. It's now designed to accommodate parties, homework, and even multiple cooks. And many electronic devices are finding a new home in the kitchen.

Despite all of the benefits of the social kitchen, creating one can be a challenge. You want a space that's efficient, functional, comfortable, and durable. We can help. First, read our essential steps to creating

a truly social kitchen, along with our advice for hiring professionals, planning the budget, and sidestepping the trends that haven't stood the test of time.

Then, turn to the buying guide on page 44 to pick the products—floors that stand up to heavy foot traffic, stain-resistant countertops, whisper-quiet dishwashers, and more—that will deliver the performance and value you need.

1 Add an island. This central counter will give people a place to sit while you're preparing the meal. Just don't let it clog traffic. There should be 42 to 48 inches of clearance on all sides. When entertaining, an island can function as an interactive buffet. Mindy Weiss, a party planner based in Los Angeles, likes to arrange salad bars, panini stations, and other dishes on the island that bring guests into the food-prep experience. Another crowd pleaser: Fill an island prep sink with ice and use it for a raw bar or a place to serve chilled drinks.

A deep overhang provides plenty of knee-room for casual dining.

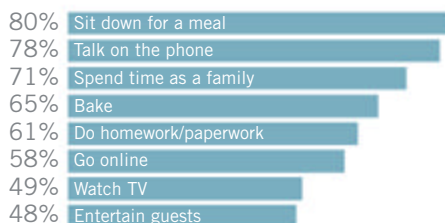




2 Create activity areas. Establishing zones for different activities will help organize the space, especially in multicook kitchens. The layout should steer children away from the main work triangle, formed by the refrigerator, range, and dishwasher and sink. Put a beverage and snack station toward the public-facing edge of the kitchen. That helps divert traffic away from the hot stove and sharp knives. Or the emphasis could be on coffee and snacks, with a coffeemaker, a cabinet for cups and mugs, and a refrigerator drawer for milk and juice boxes. If you love to bake, add a baking station near the oven, with room for baking supplies, and a marble countertop for rolling out dough.

Beyond meal prep

Last year the Consumer Reports National Research Center asked 1,012 Americans what activities they do in the kitchen at least once in a typical week. Here's what they told us:



3 Open up the space—with care. Be judicious about how many barriers you eliminate. “Too many pathways moving through the space will lead to chaos,” says Sharon Olsen, a certified kitchen designer in Portland, Ore. Using half-walls or arched openings can create a sense of openness while maintaining flow.

It's also important to visually integrate the kitchen with the rest of the home. “The open kitchen has become an ‘interior design’ feature within a larger living/dining space,” says Erica Broberg Smith, an architect based in East Hampton, N.Y. Use color to connect the kitchen to living areas, repeating the same hues in each space.

CENTER: RYANN FORD; TOP LEFT: JEFF HERR; OPPOSITE PAGE: BETH SINGER



Fit banquette bases with drawers for sneaky extra storage.

4 Bring back the eat-in kitchen. Casual dining is integral to the social kitchen, and it's good for resale value too. In fact, the eat-in kitchen was among the most desired features in a 2013 survey of homebuyers by the National Association of Realtors. Built-in banquettes are making a comeback.

"Children love them, and they are great for cozy informal dining," says Broberg Smith. They're also a place to pay the bills and do the homework (or at least see that it gets done). And equipped with flip-up tops or interior drawers, the base of a banquette can provide additional storage space for linens and other accessories.

BEST DESIGN TRENDS FOR DO-IT-ALL KITCHENS

In Out

Contemporary and transitional styles	Tuscan and country styles
European-style frameless cabinets	Traditional cabinets with ornate detail
Gray, white, and off-white color schemes	Red, bronze, and terra-cotta color schemes
Colorful small appliances	Black and white small appliances
Quartz countertops	Solid surface countertops
Pullout faucets and polished chrome finishes	Pot fillers and oil-rubbed bronze finishes
Pull-out trash/recycling bins	Appliance storage compartments, aka "garages"
LED lighting	CFL and incandescent lighting

5 Create a drop zone. When the kitchen is the nucleus of the home, it can become a dumping ground for papers, bags, jackets, and the like. A well-appointed "drop zone" just off the kitchen will provide a place for those items so that they won't enter the kitchen in the first place. If space permits, consider a mudroom with storage assigned to each family member. A hallway closet can also be converted into a functional drop zone, especially in smaller households.





6 Contain the mess. Some homeowners resist an open kitchen because they don't want guests staring at messy pots and pans. But there are ways around the dilemma. In the kitchen featured here, a peripheral cleanup zone, with sink, dishwasher, and expansive landing area for dirty dishes, helps keep the mess off to the side during dinner parties; a second island prep sink serves the main work triangle. Another strategy is to add a raised bar to the "public" side of a kitchen island. That will give guests a place to perch during meal prep, then homeowners can hide the mess from view once dinner is under way. An island bar also provides seating during casual meals.



Other measures to consider

Today, creating a truly comfortable kitchen means combining smart materials, smart choices, and the most useful modern technology. Three tips:

Pay attention to acoustics. The drawback to open kitchens is noise. "With the hardwood floors and stone countertops that everyone wants, it can sound like a restaurant on Saturday night," Olsen says. Soft layers, such as an area rug in the adjacent room, will help absorb the sound.

Pick quiet appliances. A dishwasher that scores an excellent for noise will be less distracting than one that's average or worse. And many wall ovens have a cooling fan that runs for a few

minutes after the unit is turned off, a gripe with some buyers.

Let your devices communicate.

In the past year Dacor and GE have introduced wall ovens and ranges that you can control and monitor from your smart phone—for example, pre-heating the oven from the backyard or checking the status of a roast chicken while you're doing laundry. "In that sense technology is actually freeing up the cook from being in the kitchen," says Shelia Schmitz, editor of Houzz.com, a home design website. Given how much time we're spending in today's social kitchen, an occasional break might be a good thing.

Hire the best pro for your gathering kitchen.

Picking the right contractor is one of the most important remodeling decisions you'll make. Here are the rules to hire by:

DON'T rely solely on user reviews. Online ratings services are not always impartial. For example, contractors on Angie's List who buy advertising get extra exposure.

For the site Porch, reviews are selected for posting by the professionals themselves.

DO use word of mouth. If possible, inspect past projects in person to see how the work is holding up. And check the Better Business Bureau and your state's attorney general's office for complaints.

DON'T fall for the lowball. A contractor who underestimates project costs will have to make up the difference elsewhere—maybe on the installation.

DO shop around. Interview multiple contractors to gauge the going rate for your project. That will also help you find someone with whom you'll have good rapport.

DON'T allow for "allowances." Those are open-ended amounts in the contract that could end up blowing the budget. Once the work is under way, stick to the terms.

DO get everything in writing. The contract should include a complete description of the project, all associated costs, and a target completion date.

DON'T apply for your own permits. That is the job of the contractor. If he asks you to apply, it could be a sign that he's in poor standing with the building department.

DO check the paperwork. That includes up-to-date license and insurance and workers' compensation policies. Go to the Contractor's License Reference Site, at contractors-license.org, for more details.

DON'T pay cash. That is a common tactic used by fraudulent contractors, who take the money and run.

DO set up a payment schedule. It's common to put down 30 percent upon the initial delivery of materials. Make the final payment only when you're fully satisfied with the work.



How the experts remodel

Ever wonder what the pros at Consumer Reports choose when they redo their own kitchen? Michael DiLauro, a senior market analyst specializing in cooking appliances (and a professional chef to boot), recently finished a gut renovation of the kitchen in his Connecticut home. Here he shares some of the key decisions.



What I did

Like a lot of consumers, our kitchen was inefficient, unattractive, and outdated, with vinyl floors, laminate countertops, and a wonky range hood. Plus, it was closed off from the rest of the house. So our goal was to open it up and put in the appliances

and finishes we've always wanted—now that the kids are past the age of spilled milk and magic markers on the cabinetry.

A real chef's range

The 36-inch, six-burner range offers the power and flexibility I need on an everyday basis. Its high-Btu burners bring water to a fast boil and provide searing heat for sautéing and wok cooking. The full-

surface grates make it easy to move things around and fit my oversized cookware. Appearance played a factor as well. We knew the kitchen would be visible from the living area, so we wanted a range that would attract attention. So far the red knobs on the Wolf have delivered.

The island of my dreams

Knowing that the countertop would take the brunt of our daily lives, and a fair amount of abuse, we knew this was not the place to go for anything but the best. Although expensive, with prices higher than most other materials, including granite, our quartz countertops are proving durable and easy to clean. On the island, we splurged on a waterfall effect, carrying the material down to the floor on the end that's visible from the living area.

Sticker shock

The biggest surprise was definitely the cost. We had some plumbing issues, plus material and service costs are going up as the economy improves. You often hear that you should allow a 10 to 15 percent cushion with the budget. Based on my experience, I think you should allow for 20 percent.



Lighting

Here's an illuminating idea: Choosing the right combination of fixtures and the best bulbs for your needs will not only make your kitchen more attractive but also safer and easier to work in.

Getting dinner on the table can be hard enough without struggling to read a recipe or mince an onion. Yet lighting is one of the most overlooked elements of any remodel.

"You can have the best-designed kitchen layout in the world, but if it's poorly lit, you won't enjoy working there," says John Petrie, certified master kitchen and bath designer, of Mother Hubbard's Custom Cabinetry in Mechanicsburg, Penn.

Good lighting is especially critical in today's busy kitchens, which may host activities from cooking to crafting to paying household bills. Its essentials are ambient, task, and accent lighting, carefully combined for function and effect (see "Layers of light," page 33). Undercabinet lighting is a key part of that plan. Joe Rey-Barreau, an architect and lighting designer from Lexington, Ky., recommends installing it to shed light on counter surfaces where cooking and meal prep take place, and then adding recessed lighting around the room's perimeter for ambient light. Install

recessed fixtures 30 inches from the wall, 4 to 6 feet apart. "You want the light to come from high over your shoulder, not from directly overhead where it will cast a shadow."

Some other important principles to keep in mind when designing an effective kitchen lighting plan:

Gauge the traffic. Imagine how you'll live in the space and which areas are likely to be busiest. Be sure to include task lighting above the sink, the cooktop, and any countertop where you'll spend time preparing meals or working.

Highlight the island. If your kitchen will include an island or peninsula, place lighting directly above it to keep this busy work surface well lit. Pendants are a popular and attractive choice.

Make reading easier. Today's kitchens often include a desk or niche for a computer. Be sure to install task lighting there so you easily can read notes from school, check e-mail, pay bills, and manage the family calendar, for example.



Which fixture, where

Pick the right type of lighting for each kitchen application.



Recessed

Sometimes called “can” lights, these fixtures are installed in the ceiling with only the surface of the bulb and some surrounding trim visible on the outside. They provide subtle ambient, task, or accent lighting.



Track and rail

Flexibility and the ability to adjust the placement and direction of the individual fixtures make these systems popular. Unlike the clunky, utilitarian styles of the past, many now have a sleek, contemporary look.



Scone

Available in many sizes and styles, they’re a great way to impart a soft glow to a dark spot beside a door or window.



Chandelier

The traditional choice for a dining room, chandeliers are now common in kitchens, particularly above tables and islands. Keep styles with fabric shades away from cooking areas.



Pendant

They’re a natural option for providing both task and ambient lighting above an island, peninsula, or prep sink and are often grouped in threes. Glass or fabric shades prevent glare.



Ceiling-mounted

Ceiling fixtures provide unobtrusive ambient light and are often used in conjunction with coordinating pendants and sconces for a cohesive, coordinated look.

What's hot

Light fixtures can make a strong style statement. Here's a look at the trends.



Industrial

Utilitarian designs, dark metal or reclaimed wood, and exposed bulbs give these fixtures an edgy, urban look.



Vintage

Inspired by styles from the 1920s on, these fixtures can help create a bridge between traditional and contemporary design.



Geometric

Delicate, sculptural forms, often rendered in metal, create functional focal points perfect for open-plan kitchens.



Natural

Warm, natural materials like wood, shining pieces of shell, or woven grasses create textural effect that works with many styles.

Layers of light

Every room needs three types of lighting:

- 1. Ambient (general):** This provides the overall illumination for a room. Bright, but not glaring, it can come from ceiling fixtures, pendants and chandeliers, and wall-mounted fixtures.
- 2. Task:** Focused on areas where activities such as food prep, cleanup, or reading take place, this type of lighting typically comes from pendant, undercabinet, recessed, or track fixtures.
- 3. Accent:** This type of lighting highlights design elements, such as items displayed on shelves. It comes from wall-mounted lights or pendants and should be significantly brighter than the surrounding ambient lighting.



Select Ratings Recommended models only from 52 tested.

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results							Features						
					Type	Light color	Claimed life (yrs.)	Brightness	Warm-up time	Frequent on and off performance	Light distribution	Efficiency	Color rendering index	Works with fully enclosed fixtures	Works with dimmer	Dimmable	Works with fully enclosed fixture	Works with electronic timer

A GENERAL PURPOSE 40- TO 50-WATT EQUIVALENT BULBS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Toshiba A19 40W LDAB0827WE6USD	\$28	99	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	●	●	82					●	●	Not stated	Not stated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Ikea Ledare E26 LED1014G9 (Ikea)	7	90	LED	Warm yellow	18	●	●	●	●	●	91	●	●	●	●	Not stated	●	Not stated	Not stated

B GENERAL PURPOSE 60-WATT EQUIVALENT BULBS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Samsung A19 60-Watt Warm White	16	99	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	●	●	79	●	●			Not stated	●	Not stated	Not stated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Feit Electric A19/OM/800/LED	9	99	LED	White	23	●	●	●	●	●	82	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	3M LED 60W	20	97	LED	White	25	●	●	●	●	●	81	●	●			Not stated	●	Not stated	Not stated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Philips A19 11W 60W Soft White 424382	12	95	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	●	●	80	●	●				●		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Great Value (Walmart) 60W Soft White A19 LED Dimmable	10	94	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	●	●	82	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Switch 60 Frost Soft White	50	93	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	●	●	80	●	●	●	●		●	●	

C GENERAL PURPOSE 75-WATT EQUIVALENT BULBS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	EcoSmart 14-Watt (75W) A19 Soft White 726558 (Home Depot)	35	99	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	●	●	79	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Sylvania 14W A19 75W LED Dimmable	40	99	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	●	●	81	●	●			Not stated	●	Not stated	Not stated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Philips 15-Watt (75W) A21 Soft White Dimmable LED 432161	17	97	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	●	●	81	●	●				●		

D GENERAL PURPOSE 100-WATT EQUIVALENT BULBS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Switch 100 Bright White	50	99	LED	Bluer white	23	●	●	●	●	●	81	●	●	●	●		●	●	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Sylvania Ultra-LED 100W LED20A21/DIM/O/827	50	95	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	●	●	82	●	●			●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Philips A21 19W 100W Soft White 432195	15	92	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	●	●	80	●	●				●		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Utilitech 100W Soft White CFL (Lowe's)	2.50	68	CFL	Warm yellow	9	○	●	●	NA	●	82	●			●		●		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Feit Electric ECObulb Plus 100W CFL	2.33	68	CFL	Warm yellow	9	●	○	●	NA	●	82						●		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	EcoSmart 100W Soft White CFL (Home Depot)	1.50	63	CFL	Warm yellow	9	○	●	●	NA	●	81	●			●		●		

E FLOOD/REFLECTOR 65- TO 90-WATT EQUIVALENT BULBS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Great Value (Walmart) 65W BR30 Soft White LED Dimmable	11	99	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	NA	●	82	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Utilitech 13-Watt (75W) BR30 Soft White Outdoor Flood (Lowe's)	12	98	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	NA	●	82	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Feit Electric BR30 Dimmable LED	9	96	LED	Warm yellow	23	●	●	●	NA	●	80	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	MaxLite 10 Watt BR30	11	89	LED	White	23	●	●	●	NA	●	83	●	●			●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	EcoSmart 6 in. 9.5-Watt 65W LED Downlight ECO 575L (Home Depot)	25	89	LED	Warm yellow	32	●	●	●	NA	●	92	●	●			●			

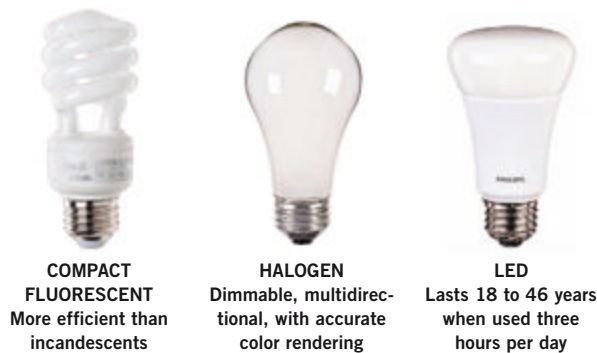
☒ CR Best Buy ☒ Recommended ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score combines life, brightness, and frequent on/off performance after 3,000 hours of use, and warm-up time, light distribution, and efficiency. NA indicates that the attribute was not rated. **Claimed life (yrs)** is how long the manufacturer says the bulb will last. **Brightness** is the average of 10 bulb samples after life testing for 3,000 hours. None of the recommended bulbs failed during life testing. **Warm-up time** is how long the bulb took to reach near-full brightness. **Frequent on/off performance** reflects the average number of 2-minute-on and 2-minute-off cycles each bulb survived. **Light distribution** measures how well a tested bulb duplicates the light distribution of an equivalent incandescents. **Light color** is the average measured color temperature of 10 bulb samples. Bulbs 2700K are warm yellow and closest to incandescents in light color. Bulbs 3000K are white and similar to halogen bulbs; 3500 to 4100K are bright white; 5000 to 6500K are bluish white. **Efficiency** is the energy, in watt-hours, required to emit a gallon of water into the air. **Price** is approximate retail per bulb.

Fluorescent, halogen, LED—what's the difference?

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 required most screw-in lightbulbs to use at least 27 percent less energy by 2014. CFLs, LEDs, and some halogen bulbs, a type of incandescent, meet that requirement. Standard incandescents did not and were phased out starting in 2012. Here are the basics on today's options:



CFLS (COMPACT FLUORESCENT LIGHTBULBS)

They use about 75 percent less energy and last 7 to 10 times longer than the incandescent bulbs they replace. Typically it takes less than a year to recoup the cost of most CFLs. The spirals and covered spirals give off light in all directions, making them a good choice for lamps; flood/reflector bulbs are more directional. Several brands offer bulbs with a plastic coating that contains the mercury and any shards if the bulb breaks. **But** they take time to fully

brighten, typically from 19 seconds for spiral bulbs to several minutes or more for flood/reflector bulbs, especially when used outdoors in frigid temperatures. Most aren't dimmable and since frequently turning them on and off affects the life of the bulb they shouldn't be used in certain sockets. CFLs contain mercury and while the amount is small and has decreased substantially, they should be recycled. This prevents mercury from being released into the environment

when the bulbs break in the trash or a landfill. If a CFL breaks at home, follow the clean-up tips from the Environmental Protection Agency.

HALOGEN

Halogens are incandescent bulbs that use about 25 to 30 percent less energy than standard incandescents. Halogen instantly produces light, is fully dimmable, and can be used almost anywhere and with dimmers and other devices. The A-type bulbs cast light in

all directions and accurately reveal the color of furnishings. **But** some do not last much longer than standard incandescent bulbs yet cost more.

LEDs (LIGHT-EMITTING DIODE BULBS)

They use slightly less energy than CFLs and manufacturers claim LEDs last 20,000 to 50,000 hours. That's about 18 to 46 years when used three hours a day. LEDs instantly brighten, even in frigid temperatures, and lifespan is not affected by frequently turning them on and off. Some LEDs we tested dim as low as incandescent bulbs.

But among A-type bulbs, the type used for lamps and other applications, not all LEDs are good at emitting light in all directions. The shapes of the lightbulbs may be unusual and the bulbs can be heavier. And LEDs can be expensive although prices have been going down. As prices drop, payback time shortens.

Undercabinet lighting

This is a critical source of task lighting in any kitchen. Architect Joe Rey-Barreau recommends "tape lighting." True to its name, it comes in strips and sticks to the underside of cabinets. (An electrician must wire it to your home's electrical system). Or pick LED fixtures, which will stay relatively cool and last a long time. Whichever type you choose, follow these steps to success:

Place them properly. Include one 12-inch undercabinet light fixture for every 4 feet of countertop. Install fixtures toward the front of the cabinets so that they light most of the work surface. If your cabinets

don't have a built-in valance to hide the fixtures, you can attach a standard 2-inch molding.

Install it yourself and save. To avoid the time and cost of hiring an electrician to put in hard-wired lighting, consider plug-in lighting. Installing corded lighting is a snap: Just screw the unit into the underside of the cabinet and plug into the nearest outlet. You'll probably want to hide the dangling wire.

Avoid glare. Some undercabinet lighting may cause a reflection off a dark or glossy countertop surface, creating glare; choose fixtures with a frosted lens to help minimize it.



SLEEK & MODERN

A makeover took this kitchen from dark and dated to bright and contemporary.

“It just wasn’t our style.” That’s how Steven Sussman describes the Connecticut ranch-style house he and wife, Marjorie, bought shortly after they married. But for this professional couple—who share the home with Marjorie’s teenage son, her elderly mother, and a live-in caregiver who’s more like part of the family—size and layout were more important than looks.

For help transforming the enormous but unattractive kitchen into something better suited to their style, the couple turned to designer Jill Neale of Taylor Bryan, a design-build firm in Suffield, Conn. “Steve has a strong minimalist aesthetic, while Marjorie’s tastes are a bit softer and more organic,” says Neale. “So we tried to create a space that felt very bright and streamlined but that incorporated those two personalities.”

To achieve this essential balance, Neale lined the room’s perimeter in glossy white cabinets—fitted with recessed tab handles, for a low-profile look—but had the two islands made by Miralis, a Canadian cabinet company, using a washed wood veneer. “The grain of the wood on the islands provided some visual movement, which was important to Marjorie,” she says. The material



After

DARK WOOD CABINETS have been replaced with lighter, more contemporary models. White paint transformed the heavy ceiling beams, helping to create an open and airy atmosphere.



After

CERAMIC TILE REPLACES the old brick fireplace surround, creating a textural tone-on-tone focal point for the casual dining area. Clear pendant lights lend illumination without blocking the view.



Before

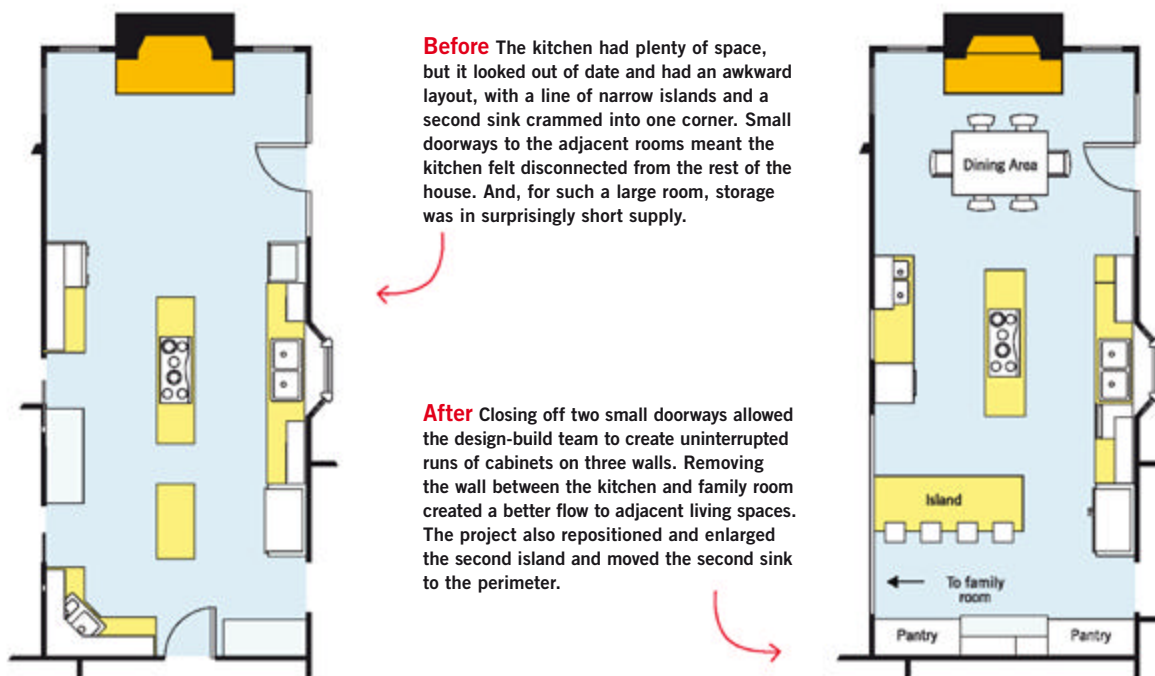


also offers a cool contrast to the kitchen's original wood flooring, which Neale's team preserved and matched where necessary. Rounding out the materials selection are the Echo Suisi tiles Neale used on both the backsplash and the fireplace surround. "They're actually floor tiles," she says. "I'd never put floor tiles on the wall before, but these have a rich, woodlike texture that worked perfectly with the other elements in the space," says Neale.

Supporting this newly sleek shell is a revised layout that organizes the large space more efficiently. Prep and cooking functions take center stage, focused around

the main island, which holds an induction cooktop. The family gathers for most meals at the dining table set in front of the fireplace at the kitchen's far end. On the opposite side of the space, a second island offers casual seating, and a wall of storage holds cooking essentials, plus a bar and a built-in coffee station.

The well-defined zones make the space more functional for the multigenerational household, as well as for frequent entertaining. "The kitchen is open to our family room, which is great for parties," says Sussman. "But of course everyone ends up in the kitchen. It's just where everyone wants to be."



FLOATING SHELVES on one wall add a decorative element in the intentionally simple space. LED lighting recessed into the lower shelf illuminates the countertop below. A second sink makes it easy for more multiple cooks to work together.

THE SECOND ISLAND, repositioned and enlarged, helps create a transition to the adjoining family room. Bar stools add casual seating.



Greta chose hive-like pendants to remind her of her dad, a beekeeper.

A chalkboard on the pantry door makes shopping list-keeping easy.





Perfect recipe



Cookbook author and Food Network Canada host Greta Podleski's kitchen is a delicious mix of practical and pretty.

Functionality and personality. Those were Greta Podleski's twin goals when she planned the update of her Toronto kitchen, and she approached them with the same care she applies to the recipes in the best-selling cookbooks she writes with her sister, Janet.

First, she sold the existing cabinets and appliances online. "The man who bought them showed up with stacks of 20s and 50s. I felt slightly uncomfortable taking a shopping bag full of cash to the bank, but I was happy the old cabinets went to a good home," she says. Blank slate in place, she sketched out an efficient new plan focused around a large, multifunctional center island.

"My kitchen is basically my office, and the island is the most essential part," says Greta. "After all the slicing and dicing and mixing

Hexagonal tiles on the backsplash lend a little sparkle.



is done, I sit there to type and edit the recipes. It's also the entertaining hub of the house. Guests sit at the island to talk to me while I cook, and I set up food and plates, buffet-style, for parties."

Because the island divides the kitchen from the open living room, Greta gave the side that faces the living area a more formal look, complete with crystal knobs and furniture-style legs. A white quartz top created an attractive and durable work surface. The dark-and-light

pairing continues in reverse on the room's perimeter, where rich brown quartz counters complement simple off-white Shaker-style cabinets. Engineered-wood floors with a hand-scraped surface are a rich-looking but dog-friendly choice underfoot, and a collection of high-powered appliances offer the cooking chops this pro requires.

Greta's favorite feature? "The feeling I get when I'm standing in the kitchen. It's such a happy place: Pretty, but not too girly. Just classic."

DONNA GRIFFITH

Get the look

Give your own kitchen an infusion of star style.



Organic texture

Artichoke Candle Holder, \$36; lmax.
wayfair.com



Versatile tray

Easy Serving Tray, \$32;
Blomus. allmodern.com



Sophisticated storage

Set of 3 Rattan Baskets, Antique Walnut, \$44;
Stacks and Stacks. stacksandstacks.com



Buzzworthy art

Golden Bees 'n Butterflies No. 1,
\$12 for 12x12-in. art print; Katie
Pertiet. art.com



Sculptural lighting

Hive 1 Light Pendant,
\$74; Bromi Design.
wayfair.com



Perfect pattern

Metallica Brushed Stainless
Steel 1x1-in. Hexagon Mosaic
Tile, \$64 per sq. ft.; Daltile.
daltile.com



Simple display

Covered cake stand, \$60; Sur La Table.
surlatable.com



Buying guide

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How to use this buying guide

The pages that follow give you the tools you need to make the right decisions on everything from refrigerators to faucets. It's a lot of information—we know.

Here's a quick guide to help you navigate. First, a little bit about us.



Consumer Reports is the world's largest independent consumer-product-testing organization. We also survey millions of consumers about their experiences with products and services. We're based in Yonkers, N.Y., and are a nonprofit organization.

What we do. We buy all the products we rate. And all of our tests and Ratings, in print and online, are unbiased and independent.

What we don't do. We don't accept any advertising; we get our money mainly through subscriptions and donations. We don't accept free test samples from manufacturers. And we don't allow our name or content to be used for any promotional purposes.

What the symbols mean

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

CR Best Buy

These models offer the best combination of performance and price. All are recommended.

Recommended

These are high-performing models that stand out.

We rate products on a 100-point scale; these symbols help you tell at a glance which scored well and which didn't. Those rated Excellent aced most tests. Poor indicates serious flaws.

When narrowing your choices among models, weigh performance, features, price, and attributes that matter to you, such as color, size, or style. For the best combination of performance and price, pick a CR Best Buy.

Most & least reliable brands

GAS RANGES

Kenmore	9%
Frigidaire	9%
GE	9%
Whirlpool	11%
LG	11%
KitchenAid	15%
Maytag	15%

Source: Consumer Reports Annual Product Reliability Survey.

Reliability counts, too. For home-related products alone, we survey hundreds of thousands of people about their experiences. The graph shows the percentage of models of each brand that needed repairs or had a serious problem.

Ratings

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results						Features						
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.		<div><div></div><div>0100</div><div>P F G V E</div></div>	Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	High-power elements/burners	Medium-power elements/burners	Low-power elements/burners	Convection mode	Cooking drawer	Slide-in	Stainless steel available

F GAS AND DUAL-FUEL, SINGLE OVEN (30-INCH)

✓	1	Samsung NX58F5700WS	\$1,700	79	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	2	1	●		●
✓	2	Samsung NX58H9500WS	2,500	77	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	2	1	●	●	●
✓	3	GE PGS920SEFSS	2,800	73	●	●	●	○	●	○	1	3	1	●	●	●
✓	4	Frigidaire Gallery FGGF3032MW	775	71	○	●	●	○	●	○	2	2	1	●		●
✓	5	Samsung NX58F5500SS	1,000	71	○	●	●	○	●	○	2	2	1			●

Overall score is the sum of the scores for each category, shown by the symbols at right.

The black dots indicate features that make the models more convenient to use.



For a custom look, vary cabinet finishes and choose architectural details like textural door and drawer fronts.

Storage smarts

New cabinets can make a big impact on how your kitchen looks and functions, but you have to shop carefully to avoid blowing your budget.

Cabinets can be the most expensive part of a kitchen remodel, gobbling up between 30 and 60 percent of your total budget, according to the National Kitchen & Bath Association. But you can stick to the lower end of that range if you pick stock units, or exceed it with highly detailed custom designs. And no matter how much you spend, smart planning will help your investment create a look you love while solving your clutter conundrums at the same time.

And there is some good news. Many premium features, such as dovetail joints, have moved down to lower-priced stock cabinets, available at your local big-box store. More interior storage features and a wide variety of style choices are also moving bargain basics closer to the midlevel, semicustom models that span the gap between stock and made-to-order cabinets.

Better yet, you can save thousands by using our tips to give the cabinets you already have a fresh new look and new convenience, as long as they're structurally sound.

Bargain-friendly, ready-to-assemble cabinets are another smart way to save if your old ones are past refurbishing. Our tests across types and price ranges have found that certain ready-to-assemble lines were built better and more durably than much pricier units.

Use our information on cabinet construction—not price alone—as a guide. Also see page 50 for tips on organizing your cabinets.



Look for ways to squeeze in extra storage, adding pull-out units beside the fridge, for example.

How to choose

Spend wisely.

Well-built drawers and guides are important because they get the most use. Better units are made of $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick plywood or medium-density fiberboard, not particleboard (see “Details that count,” on page 48).

Consider the options.

Work savers include a lazy Susan, a pull-down soap and sponge holder, roll-out shelves, and deep pot drawers.

Stick with basics.

Specialty finishes usually add about 10 percent to 20 percent to the cost, for example. Glass doors and interior organizers drive up the price, too.

Remember labor costs.

Professional installation alone can easily cost more than half of what you paid for the cabinets. So unless you have the skills to handle the job yourself, pad your budget accordingly.

Details that count

Style might be what grabs your eye at the store, but it's the inner details that help well-made cabinets look good and last year after year. Most manufacturers offer a similar range of door styles, whether they're selling ready-made, semicustom, or made-to-order custom cabinets. Here are the features to look for—and some less robust details to avoid:

■ Drawer hardware

Full-extension guides are better than integrated rails or undermounted double-roller designs. Premium models often have a “soft close” feature that stops drawers from slamming shut.

■ Shelves

Look for $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plywood or medium-density fiberboard (MDF). Lesser quality $\frac{5}{8}$ - and $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch particleboard shelves are more likely to sag.

■ Cabinet box

Best is $\frac{1}{2}$ - to $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch, furniture-grade plywood. MDF is OK, but try to avoid $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch coated particleboard.

■ Drawers

The best have solid-wood sides, dovetail joinery, and a plywood bottom that fits grooves on all sides. Avoid stapled particleboard.

■ Doors

A solid-wood frame surrounding a solid-wood or plywood panel is preferable to veneered particleboard or an MDF panel. Avoid laminate or thermofoil over particleboard. We didn't find any differences among types of door hinges in our extensive cabinet tests.

■ Mounting strips

Look for $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch hardwood or metal with bolt holes. MDF, particleboard, or wood that's thinner than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch can be a concern for heavily loaded wall cabinets. Ask your installer to be sure to use the stronger stuff.



Particleboard



Plywood



Get the installation right

A good, safe installation will protect your investment. It can prevent boxes from warping, ensure that doors sit flush, and even keep wall cabinets from falling. When the installer comes to make an estimate, have a plan handy. That way, he can account for the heights and types of new wall cabinets, soffits, locations of electrical outlets and plumbing, and other variables that might affect installation.

Make sure the estimate includes removing and disposing of your existing cabinets and any demolition. Before hiring an installer, talk to

suppliers and, if possible, at least three former customers to find out how the work has held up. Ask for copies of the installer's insurance certificates as well.

Certification in kitchen and bath remodeling from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry is usually a plus; it indicates a high level of professionalism.

For safety's sake, shore up the wall mountings. And be certain the cabinet installer adequately reinforces the mounting strips if they're made of thin particleboard.

Product guide

Even basic stock cabinets offer a growing number of options, and midlevel and premium semicustom lines include dozens of styles and storage features. Choices also go far beyond traditional oak finishes and include tight-grained maple and cherry, as well as stained and painted finishes.

BASIC

Best for those who don't need the size and storage options offered by custom and other high-end cabinets. Often called stock, these off-the-shelf units include ready-to-assemble cabinets packed in flat containers.

But you get fewer style and trim options, sizes, and features overall. Cabinet boxes are often thin-veneered particleboard rather than more durable solid plywood. Many models use frameless construction, with the doors and door fronts hiding the frame.

Price About \$250 to \$350 for a typical 21-inch-wide base and 30-inch-tall wall-cabinet duo.



MIDLEVEL

Best for most kitchens. Includes lower-priced semicustom models that offer many made-to-order choices in size, door style, materials, finish, trim, and accessories. Many use face-frame construction, where part of the frame shows between doors and drawers.

But features and quality for this group varied the most in our tests. Cabinet boxes still tend to be veneered particleboard, despite the higher prices.

Price About \$400 and more for a typical 21-inch-wide base and 30-inch-tall wall-cabinet duo.

PREMIUM

Best for those who want the most style and storage options short of made-to-order custom cabinets. Includes higher-priced semicustom models with plywood boxes and other premium materials and hardware. Widths can come in finer, 1/4-inch increments rather than the typical 3 inches.

But some can cost almost as much as made-to-order cabinets without offering as many storage and style options.

Price About \$600 to \$1,000-plus for a 21-inch-wide base and 30-inch-tall wall-cabinet duo.





Organized, inside and out

A clutter-free kitchen is easier and more enjoyable to work in. Before you order your cabinets, start by making a list of all of the items you plan to store, including pots and pans, utensils, dinnerware, dry goods, and dish towels. Make sure you'll have easy-to-access spots for everything, plus a bit of room to grow. Some popular storage options to consider as you plan your cabinet layout:

Message-center cabinets that include shallow storage for small items as well as integrated dry-erase message boards or bulletin boards.

Toe-kick cabinets that install between the floor and the base of a cabinet, perfect for holding awkward, shallow items such as cookie sheets, trays, and place mats.



Drawer dividers for corralling small items such as cooking utensils and flatware.

Slide-out wastebaskets to keep trash easily accessible but neatly out of sight.

Pantry cabinets that feature roll-out trays and adjustable door racks.

Lift cabinets with spring-loaded shelves that swing up and out to provide easy access to mixers or food processors—then tuck away when they're not in use.

Cubby units that install underneath wall cabinets to hold wine bottles.

Vertical dividers, which neatly shelve hard-to-store cookie sheets and trays on their sides.

Tip **INSTALL INTERIOR ORGANIZERS** You don't have to rip out your existing kitchen cabinets to get clutter-busting extras. You can buy and install interior organizers yourself and save thousands over a kitchen full of new cabinets. Options include pull-out shelves, retractable trash cans, drawer dividers, and much more. Just be sure to carefully measure the cabinet interiors before you head to the home-improvement store. Many organizers come in various sizes, with the dimensions printed on the box, and this is one place where fractions of an inch really count.



Rubbermaid slide-out lid organizer



Merillat Cutting Board Kit



Finish first

The finish you choose for your cabinets can set the tone for your entire kitchen. Options include clean and modern looks for contemporary kitchens; deep, rich woods for traditional elegance; and purposely “worn” and distressed finishes for old-fashioned or rustic spaces.

The right choice for your kitchen depends on your personal style—and your lifestyle. “The white kitchen is a true classic,” says Susan Serra, certified kitchen designer, certified aging-in-place

specialist, and author of The Kitchen Designer blog. “And it’s re-emerging today as an easy look that can be used to interpret any kitchen-design theme.”

If you prefer a more natural look, consider a finish that reveals the wood grain of the cabinet rather than obscuring it. Glazed finishes, for example, add soft, translucent color on top of the wood but also allow the beauty of the grain to show through. Be warned, though: That finish often comes at a premium price. For

those in the market for something a bit more modern, matte and high-gloss finishes are available in almost every bold color in the rainbow (not to mention trendy metallics, black, and white).

If you can’t choose just one, create a layered look by combining two or more finishes. To complement a natural wood finish, for example, add an accent cabinet in an opaque color such as pale yellow or blue, or in a neutral, such as taupe. Or choose a bold color for one area, such as the island.



Getting a ‘custom’ look

If you’re buying budget-friendly stock or semicustom cabinets, you don’t have to settle for the ordinary. Decorative elements can give even basic stock cabinets a more personalized look in an array of styles, including modern, country, and traditional.

Accent doors, available in a variety of styles—textured or colored, frosted glass, and stainless steel—can enhance visual interest or create an industrial look, suggests Janet Vanderlugt, kitchens manager for Ikea.

Moldings, which range in style from simple and classic to elegant and ornate, can be added to the tops, bottoms, or edges of cabinets as a finishing touch, or along the bottoms of wall cabinets to conceal under-cabinet lighting. Just be sure the style you choose suits the look of your cabinets.

“Legs,” or feet, added to the bases of built-in cabinets, create the “unfitted” effect of freestanding furniture (pictured at left).

Decorative trim pieces, such as corbels, corner details, turnings, and onlays, can be found for a great price in local lumber stores and home centers.



A mix of materials, like the quartz and wood used in this kitchen, can create a warm, personalized look.

Counter offers

Stone, laminate, bamboo, and more: Our tough tests reveal the best, and worst.

Stone counters are at the top of the kitchen-update wishlist for many, but while you might expect natural stone to be a long-lasting choice, our tests found huge variations in performance among granite, limestone, marble, quartz, and soapstone. Some can take lots of abuse; others need lots of TLC.

We stained, sliced, scratched, scorched, and nicked 14 materials from leading brands. Except for

recycled glass, we found little difference among competing brands of each type of material. That's why we rate materials, not brands. Use our Ratings to find which is right for you. And consider a few do's and don'ts:

Don't rely on tiny samples, online photos, or a brochure. Natural stone can vary significantly from store samples, so go to a stone yard to pick a slab yourself.

Don't be afraid to mix and match. Choose a more durable or less expensive material for heavily used areas and something less durable as an accent, such as on an island. You'll save money, and add visual interest.

Do keep an open mind. You might

have dismissed laminate as dated, but it looks better than you may remember, and it's durable and budget-friendly. Eco-friendly bamboo counters were easily damaged in our tests; recycled glass offers some of the same benefits and better performance.

Do remember resale value. Be realistic. Choose a material that won't make prospective buyers wary of maintenance. Tile, which can chip and stain in the grout lines, for example, can raise a red flag.

Do have the installer measure. Make sure the contract lists the counter's thickness and finish, and fees for sink and faucet cutouts, edge treatments, and backsplash.

How to choose

Of course you want a countertop that looks good on the day it's installed. But it should look just as good five years later. Before you buy, note how your friends' countertops have held up. Then think about your tolerance for stains and wear and tear. Are you a perfectionist? If so, you probably won't get past marble's stains to appreciate the "patina". Consider upkeep and these tips:

Take note of seams.

They should be almost invisible in solid-surfacing and stainless-steel counters. For other countertop materials, $\frac{1}{16}$ inch or less is standard, according to the Fabricator Network, a trade group. Wide joints are a sign of sloppy installation.

Consider the finish.

Quartz and granite are sold with polished (glossy) or honed (matte)

finishes. In our tests, both were about the same at fighting stains that were allowed to dry overnight. Granites with proprietary sealers, such as Stonemark, performed no better than regular granite. Matte and grain finishes help conceal scratches in stainless steel better than in polished finishes, but expect fingerprints. Quartz performed similarly regardless of the finish, but butcher-block and concrete counters performed differently in our tests depending on the sealer used.

Get edgy.

The edge treatment you choose will affect the look of your counters. Trimming laminate counters with wood can create a higher-end look and prevent chipping. For stone counters, rounded edges are less likely to chip. Straight and beveled edges give a more modern look, and an S-shaped

curve called an ogee offers stone or solid surfacing a more traditional feel. Some add to the cost, so check first.

Think about the sink.

Top-mounted sinks, also called drop-ins, sit on top of the counter. Undermounted sinks are installed under the countertop and require a waterproof countertop material, such as quartz, stainless steel, solid surfacing, or concrete. (Water will damage wood or laminate countertops.) Stainless-steel and solid surfacing can be used for the counter and sink.

Tip **THICK OR THIN?** Standard stone counters are 2 to 3 centimeters thick. For a thicker, contemporary look, consider splurging on built-up or mitered edges.



Eased profile



Bevel profile



Bullnose profile



Short ogee profile



One of the biggest trends in kitchen countertop design is the "waterfall" edge (also called an apron or riser), which flows vertically down the edge of an island, peninsula, or end of a run of cabinets. It can lend a rich, modern look—but also adds expense.



The worst stains for every surface

You might expect mustard and grape juice to be in a lineup of worst countertop stain offenders. But of the 20 household products in our stain tests, food coloring and permanent marker proved to be the toughest to wash away. Many things stained bamboo, which is no surprise given its dismal overall score. And almost as many items stained limestone and butcher block with an oil-rubbed finish. Here's what left a visible mark on the other countertop materials:



Tile

Food coloring, crayon, ink, permanent marker, and rust

Concrete (with penetrating sealer)

Food coloring, hot oil, permanent marker, and shoe polish

Paper composite

Drain cleaner, permanent marker, and rust

Marble

Food coloring and shoe polish

Stainless steel

Drain cleaner and tarnish remover

Recycled glass

Food coloring

Make it last

A few simple steps can keep your counters looking better, longer.

Pick the right professional. To be sure your contractor's countertops will stand the test of time, check references from jobs that were completed at least a year or two ago. That's especially critical for concrete counters, because most are made from scratch, and cracking can be a problem. To guarantee installation according to warranty standards, select a manufacturer-certified installer. Otherwise, the manufacturer might not cover the work if problems arise.

Seal the surface. Stone, concrete, butcher block, and the grout between tiles require sealing and periodic resealing to resist stains. There's an easy way to test the seal: Put a few drops of water on stone that's near the sink or another high-use area and let it stand for 15 minutes. If the water doesn't stay in a bead, it's time for resealing.

Act fast. Clean stains as they happen, before they have a chance to set—even on supposedly stain-resistant materials. Follow the manufacturer's or installer's care instructions; not doing so could void the warranty. Cut only on cutting boards. Taking a little extra time can keep your counters looking good.



Cambria



Custom style (on the cheap)

Even if you've chosen budget-friendly materials, you can still use finishing touches to give your kitchen custom appeal. For example, the backsplash—the area between the top of the counter and the bottom of the wall cabinets—can be a great place to add contrast and texture. And special edges can spruce up even low-cost countertops.

Because backsplashes don't get as much wear as countertops, you might opt for higher-maintenance materials there. For example, if you like the look of ceramic or glass tile but don't want to deal with cleaning grout on the countertops, tile the backsplash for a colorful highlight. Backsplashes are also at an ideal height for convenient and accessible storage. Systems with shelves, hooks, and rods are widely available. But don't hide a fancy backsplash with a storage system.

Countertop edging is another place to add visual interest, but one to consider carefully. Families with small children might want to stick with standard rounded corners, which are less likely to injure kids—or you, if you bump into them. Rounded edges are also less likely to chip. If you're willing to spend extra—\$10 to \$50 per linear foot—there are many profiles to consider.

The bullnose (rounded edge), the ogee (S-shaped), and the bevel (slanted edge) are three of the most popular. Choose the one best suited to the overall style of your kitchen.

Product guide

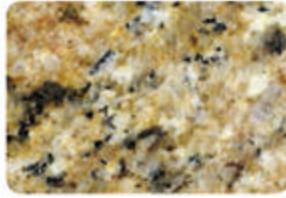


QUARTZ

Best for busy kitchens and bathrooms. It is stain- and heat-resistant and low maintenance. It doesn't need sealing and is available in vibrant colors and in styles that look like natural stone.

But edges and corners can chip; rounded edges help. And stone finishes can appear more uniform than natural.

Price \$40 to \$100 per square foot; \$2,240 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen



GRANITE

Best for a natural stone look. It can withstand heavy use, and polished and matte finishes resist stains when properly sealed. It also resists heat and scratches.

But it can chip and needs resealing to protect it from stains. And it can look different from samples, so it's best to choose it yourself at a stone yard.

Price \$40 to \$100 per square foot; \$2,240 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen



RECYCLED GLASS

Best for a contemporary look when it's made with large shards, or it can resemble solid surfacing when it's finely ground. It's resistant to heat, cuts, and scratches.

But chips and stains can be a problem. Unlike other recycled-glass counters we tested, Cosentino's Eco line developed a thin crack during our heat tests.

Price \$60 to \$120 per square foot; \$3,360 to \$6,720 for a typical kitchen

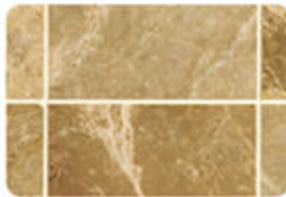


LAMINATE

Best for a wide variety of colors and patterns at a budget-friendly price. It's excellent at resisting stains and heat damage, and is simple to install.

But it's easily scratched by knives and can't be repaired. And most laminates have visible seams, though more seamless options are now available.

Price \$10 to \$40 per square foot; \$560 to \$2,240 for a typical kitchen

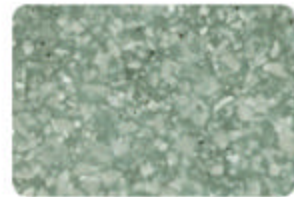


TILE (ceramic or porcelain)

Best for use near stoves because it's heat-resistant. It comes in many colors, sizes, and patterns.

But it chips. The grout between tiles can stain even when it's sealed, and it can mildew. Poor installation can increase those problems. Thinner grout lines and darker grout might help somewhat.

Price \$5 to \$30 per square foot; \$280 to \$1,680 for a typical kitchen

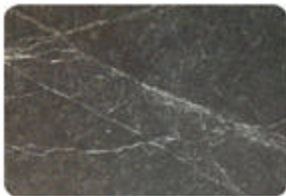


SOLID SURFACING

Best for seamless installations, especially in bathrooms. Many colors and styles are available, including those that look like concrete, stone, and quartz. It's stain-resistant, and small nicks and scratches can be repaired.

But it's easily scratched. And stone finishes can look more uniform than natural.

Price \$35 to \$100 per square foot; \$1,960 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen



SOAPSTONE

Best for adding the beauty of stone to a low-traffic kitchen. It withstands heat very well, and small scratches can be repaired. Slabs vary, so go to a stone yard.

But it's easily sliced, scratched, and nicked. Stain resistance is so-so, and it needs to be rubbed with mineral oil periodically.

Price \$50 to \$100 per square foot; \$2,800 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen

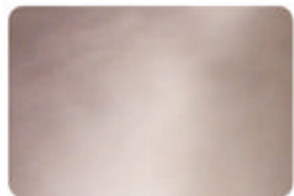


CONCRETE

Best for customizing. It can be custom-dyed or textured.

But it can develop cracks. Its durability depends on the fabricator's skill and the sealers used. Topical sealers, which resist stains but not heat, aren't ideal for kitchens. Penetrating sealers resist heat but not stains, and they must be reapplied.

Price \$60 to \$120 per square foot; \$3,360 to \$6,720 for a typical kitchen

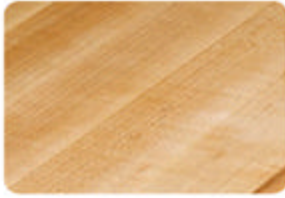


STAINLESS STEEL

Best for a modern kitchen. It repels stains and heat, and doesn't rust or discolor. A countertop can be made with an integral sink for a seamless look.

But it shows fingerprints, and it dents and scratches easily. Matte and grain finishes hide damage better. Stainless steel can look cold and clinical.

Price \$50 to \$150 per square foot; \$2,800 to \$8,400 for a typical kitchen



BUTCHER BLOCK

Best for a country kitchen and for cutting produce. It's easy to install and repair.

But it might need periodic sealing or refinishing to remove cuts, dings, and scratches. Its finish affects performance. Varnish improves stain resistance, and penetrating oils decrease it.

Price \$40 to \$100 per square foot; \$2,240 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen

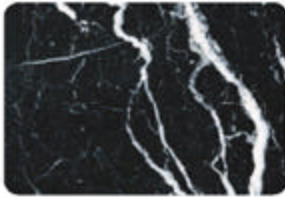


LIMESTONE

Best for a natural stone look (without heavy veining or graining) in a low-traffic kitchen. It withstands heat very well.

But it's a very soft stone that's easily sliced, nicked, and scratched. It's also porous so it stains easily, even when it's properly sealed.

Price \$50 to \$100 per square foot; \$2,800 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen



MARBLE

Best for a classic stone look in low-traffic areas, such as a baking zone. It's available in a wide range of natural colors.

But it's more porous than granite, so it's not as stain-resistant. It also scratches easily, isn't very heat-resistant, and needs to be resealed periodically to help ward off stains.

Price \$50 to \$150 per square foot; \$2,800 to \$8,400 for a typical kitchen



BAMBOO

Best for show rather than daily use. It's available in several styles, including a parquet pattern.

But it's easily stained, scorched, sliced, and nicked. The maker might warn against using it around a sink because moisture can warp the material. And it might darken over time.

Price \$40 to \$100 per square foot; \$2,240 to \$5,600 for a typical kitchen

Ratings

All tested products in performance order.

Material	Price per sq. ft.	Overall score	Test results				
			Resists				
			Stains	Cutting	Heat	Abrasion	Impact
COUNTERTOPS							
Quartz (engineered stone)	\$40-\$100	84	●	●	●	●	●
Granite	40-100	81	●	●	●	●	●
Recycled glass (penetrating sealer) ¹	60-120	69	○	●	●	●	●
Laminate	10-40	68	●	●	●	○	●
Tile (ceramic and porcelain)	5-30	67	●	●	●	●	○
Solid surfacing	35-100	53	●	●	●	●	●
Soapstone (mineral-oil finish)	50-100	46	○	●	●	●	●
Concrete (penetrating sealer)	60-120	40	●	○	●	●	●
Concrete (topical sealer)	60-120	39	●	●	●	○	●
Stainless steel	50-150	39	○	●	●	●	●
Butcher block (varnished)	40-100	37	●	●	●	●	●
Paper composite ²	30-100	34	●	●	●	●	●
Limestone	50-100	27	●	●	●	●	●
Butcher block (oil finish)	40-100	24	●	●	●	●	●
Marble	50-150	14	○	●	●	●	●
Bamboo (beeswax/mineral-oil finish)	40-100	10	●	●	●	○	●

¹ Unlike other brands, Cosentino's Eco line of recycled-glass counters developed a thin crack during our heat tests and was excluded from the Ratings. ² Only Richlite's product was tested. Results for other brands may vary.

What the symbols mean ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score summarizes performance in all tests. **Stains** shows resistance to 20 common foods and household products. **Cutting** reflects resistance to damage from weighted chef's and serrated knives used in slicing and chopping motions. **Heat** gauges how well materials resisted damage and discoloration from a pot filled with oil heated to 400° F. **Abrasion** is resistance to damage from a weighted sanding block. **Impact** reflects ability to withstand blunt and pointed weights dropped from up to 3½ feet. **Price** is per square foot, including installation.



Top floors

Vinyl sheet flooring, like Armstrong's Duality Premium in Leather Suede, can create the look of ceramic tile.

The look of natural materials plus durability and DIY-friendly installation: Today's kitchen flooring options offer the best of all worlds.

Distressed floors are more than just a style statement: Those prefab dents and dings help hide and blend the real-world wear and tear of today's busy kitchen. Even vinyl floors are capturing the rustic look and feel of vintage wood, without the expense. And many of the best within all types literally make do-it-yourself installation a snap by clicking together and "floating" in place without glue or nails. Here are some standouts from our latest tests:

Better pretenders Like other laminates, Armstrong's Coastal Living L3051 White Wash Walnut, \$3.50 per square foot, includes a

photo of natural material beneath a clear wear layer. It has a weathered look and its toughness under our scratching, staining, fading, and other simulated abuse earned it top scores. Vinyl is an even harder option: Tarkett's PermaStone vinyl tile, \$4.70, offers a marbled-sandstone look that stood up to everything we threw at it.

Wood that wears well. Superb resistance to stains and scratches helped Armstrong's Century Farm Hickory Natural, \$6.50, join our top wood picks. But even those woods couldn't match the toughest bamboos, including Teragren

Synergy Wide Plank Java, \$7, which was among the few natural floorings that resisted dents well.

Floors with easier installation. Most of our picks can be floated without glue or fasteners, including Teragren's Portfolio Naturals Wheat, \$7.50. Want the lower cost and higher dent resistance of vinyl? Shaw's Matrix Regency Gunstock Oak, \$2 at Lowe's, is among a growing number of vinyls that you snap together, rather than glue down. Style Selections' Antique Oak WD4712, \$3, just missed our list of top vinyls. But it's among the first that offer peel-and-stick installation.



How to choose

Even floating floors require careful prep that includes removing any nails and staples from the subfloor. You'll also need to lay down a leveling compound for dips deeper than $\frac{3}{8}$ inch over 8 to 10 feet. (Use a straight edge to check.) Here's what else to consider:

Weigh your needs.

Check the scores for denting if you have children or entertain often. The ceramic-tile floors we tested didn't crack until we dropped the equivalent of a heavy pot on them. But as with other floating floors, replacing a damaged piece involves chiseling it out and gluing in a new one or, with the SnapStone, removing the entire row and adjacent molding.

Choose a factory finish.

Prefinished wood and bamboo floors cost about 40 percent more than unfinished floors. But you'll probably save overall because factory floor finishes tend to last longer.

Check for certification.

Vinyl floors with the industry's FloorScore certification emit relatively low levels of volatile organic compounds, which are linked to health problems and pollution. (The vinyl we recommend has it.) For wood, certification by the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative offers assurance that it's from responsibly managed forests. Check packaging to be sure the product and manufacturer are certified.

Product guide

1. SOLID WOOD AND BAMBOO

Best for natural warmth. Solid flooring can usually be sanded and refinished many times, if necessary.

But both tend to dent easily, a problem for households with children. Several changed color under UV light, and some can be damaged by flooding. Both are challenging to install.

Price \$5 to \$10 per square foot*

2. ENGINEERED WOOD AND BAMBOO

Best for easy installation and natural warmth. This veneer over substrate can usually be nailed, stapled, or glued in place—or snapped together and floated without fasteners or glue. Many products of this type can be refinished once.

But they can be damaged by flooding, and they usually show wear quickly and dent easily.

Price \$4 to \$9 per square foot*

3. PLASTIC LAMINATE

Best for toughness, lots of styles, and easy installation. It can mimic a variety of natural materials and can usually be floated. The best products wear well, and all resist stains and sunlight.

But most dent relatively easily, and plastic laminate can't be refinished.

Price \$3 to \$7 per square foot*

4. VINYL

Best for practicality and easy installation.

Many products resist wear from moisture, dents, stains, sun, and foot traffic, with tiles and strips doing best. Some newer styles look more like stone than older versions do.

But even the best still look like vinyl up close.

Price \$2 to \$6 per square foot*

5. LINOLEUM

Best for those who want a sustainable, resilient surface and lots of style choices. All of those we tested resisted stains and especially sun exposure. Some also had other strengths.

But all fell down in at least one of our tough tests. Vinyl tiles offer more choices and better performance overall.

Price \$4 to \$9 per square foot*

6. CERAMIC TILE

Best for kitchen projects with a bigger budget, though newer floating varieties such as those in our Ratings are more affordable. This natural material offers an array of styles and colors. And it tends to resist wear well.

But most don't float and are difficult to install. Dropped items can crack it, and grout stains. Replacing a floated tile can be tricky.

Price \$8 to \$15 per square foot; \$5 to \$8 for floating products*

*Prices include installation.



Tip STEPS TO SAVINGS

RETAILERS' LOSSES CAN BE YOUR GAIN. Discounters such as Lumber Liquidators (lumberliquidators.com) and iFloor (ifloor.com) buy directly from manufacturers and sometimes offer deals on overstocked flooring. You also can often save on opened or damaged boxes and flooring with minor surface flaws.

BUY ONLY WHAT YOU NEED. Determine the room's square footage by multiplying length by width. Then buy 10 percent additional to allow for the unexpected.

SEE THE REAL THING. Paying for samples costs far less than buying flooring that looks great in a catalog or online—and all wrong once it's installed in your kitchen.

DO YOUR OWN PREP WORK. Even if you hire a pro for installation, you can save hundreds by tearing out old flooring, leveling the subfloor, and removing any baseboard that's in the way yourself.



For a streamlined look, consider repeating the countertop color on the floor.



Keeping it clean

Most flooring comes with some specifics on maintenance do's and don'ts (don't use ammonia-based cleaners on wood, for example). But how do you remove chewing gum, wax, and other messes without damaging the finish? Here are some tips from our experts:

Minor scratches and chips Some hardwood flooring manufacturers offer color-blended filler that you can use to hide small scratches and dings. If a small area of hardwood flooring is worn, try sanding and refinishing it. But heavily damaged pieces might need to be replaced, especially plastic laminate, which can't be sanded or refinished (the damaged piece has to be chiseled out and a new one inserted). On all types of flooring, try a color-matched felt marker to

camouflage small scratches and surface imperfections.

Gum and wax On wood, cover the stain with a sealed ice pack to make it brittle enough to break off in pieces. Do the same on plastic laminate, vinyl, or linoleum, but be especially careful when scraping it off (try a plastic scraper or credit card). And on any flooring, finish the job by wiping the area clean with a damp cloth to remove any remaining residue.

Oil, paint, marker, lipstick, ink, and tar On vinyl, use a clean cloth dampened with warm water and detergent; on wood and plastic laminates, use nail-polish remover. Avoid using abrasive cleaners, steel wool, and heavy-duty scouring pads.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS

Top performers usually resisted wear, scratches, and color change better than others of their type. But dents were a challenge for most. Below, we focus on top picks with specific strengths, value, or both.



EcoTimber Bamboo



A1 Teragren Portfolio Naturals Wheat TPF-SYN-WHT-126-DL



A2 Eco Timber Woven Honey WBH061



A3 Mullican St. Andrews Solid Oak Strip 10930



B1 Teragren Synergy Wide Plank Java



B2 Harris Wood Traditions SpringLoc Red Oak Bridle HE25050K48



C1 Armstrong Coastal Living L3051 White Wash Walnut



C2 Hampton Bay Enderbury Hickory 367551 (Home Depot)



C3  **CR Best Buy** Project Source Winchester Oak 2765 (Lowe's)




D1 Tarkett NAFCO PermaStone Collection: Natural Slate-Sand Stone



D2 Congoleum DuraCeramic Sierra Slate SI-74 Golden Greige



E1  **CR Best Buy** Armstrong Marmorette Oak Brown LP066



F1 SnapStone Beige 11-001-02-01

Ratings

All tested products in performance order.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price (sq. ft.)	Sq. ft. per box	Overall score	Resists				
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.				Foot traffic	Scratches	Stains	Dents	Sunlight (UV)
					0 100					
					P F G VG E					

A PREFINISHED SOLID WOOD Usually nailed to a subfloor at grade or above.

✓	1	Teragren Portfolio Naturals Wheat TPF-SYN-WHT-126-DL ①	\$7.50	20	75	●	●	●	●	●
✓	2	EcoTimber Woven Honey WBH061 ① ②	6.00	23	74	●	●	●	●	○
✓	3	Mullican St. Andrews Solid Oak Strip 10930 ②	6.30	24	65	○	●	●	●	○
	4	Home Legend Strand Woven Solid Bamboo Toast HL40S (Home Depot) ②	3.00	23	60	●	●	●	●	●
	5	Bruce Dundee Plank CB1210 ②	5.70	22	59	●	○	●	●	●
	6	Armstrong American Scrape Oak Brown Bear SAS503 ②	7.00	24	58	●	●	●	●	○
	7	Allen + Roth Autumn Oak LSAR45-01 (Lowe's) ②	5.50	19	57	●	●	●	●	●
	8	Home Legend Horizontal Solid Bamboo Toast BAFL24TO (Home Depot) ②	2.00	24	57	●	●	●	●	●
	9	Mullican Cumaru Natural 17711 ②	8.50	15	57	●	●	●	●	○
	10	Noble House Solid Oak Gunstock FC3410 ②	3.50	21	56	●	●	●	●	●
	11	Lumber Liquidators Virginia Mill Works Butcher Block Sunset Mountain Oak 10022504	5.00	12	56	●	●	●	●	●
	12	Natural Floors by USFloors Bamboo Woven Strand 602WSS ① ②	4.00	23	47	●	●	●	●	○
	13	Mohawk Rockford Red Oak Natural WSC58-10 ②	5.00	19	45	●	●	●	●	○
	14	Lumber Liquidators Bellawood Natural Red Oak ②	4.40	40	44	●	●	●	●	●
	15	Lumber Liquidators Morning Star Strand Natural ① ②	3.90	17	41	●	●	●	●	●
	16	Lauson Classics Northern Red Oak Natural RO020225 ②	6.40	20	40	●	●	●	●	○

B ENGINEERED WOOD Can usually be floated anywhere in the house.

✓	1	Teragren Synergy Wide Plank Java ①	7.00	23	76	○	●	●	○	●
✓	2	Harris Wood Traditions SpringLoc Red Oak Bridle HE25050K48	5.50	33	69	○	●	●	●	●
✓	3	Armstrong Century Farm Hickory Natural GCH452NALG	6.50	28	67	○	●	●	●	●
	4	Home Legend Hand Scraped Oak Gunstock Click-Lock HL16 (Home Depot)	3.40	25	55	●	●	●	●	●
	5	Mannington American Hardwoods American Oak Plank	4.00	36	55	●	●	●	●	●
	6	Mullican MeadowBrooke Cumaru Natural 17107	8.00	29	45	●	●	●	●	○
	7	Armstrong Premier Performance Red Oak Natural EHP3000	8.00	28	43	●	●	●	●	●
	8	Mohawk Pastoria Red Oak Natural HCC27-10 (Home Depot)	4.30	29	41	●	●	●	●	●
	9	Millstead Red Oak Natural Click PF9356 (Home Depot)	3.00	20	37	●	●	●	●	●
	10	Natural Floors by USFloors Bamboo 609LS ①	3.30	17	34	●	○	●	●	○
	11	Home Legend Lisbon Natural HL9311LN (Home Depot) ③	3.50	23	34	●	●	●	●	●
	12	Wicanders Corkcomfort Series 100 WRT Natural O801007 ③	7.00	23	33	●	●	●	●	●
	13	Lisbon Cork Evora ③	4.00	13	32	●	●	●	●	●

C LAMINATE Can usually be floated anywhere in the house.

✓	1	Armstrong Coastal Living L3051 White Wash Walnut	3.50	14	79	●	●	●	●	●
✓	2	Hampton Bay Enderbury Hickory 367551 (Home Depot)	2.60	25	76	●	●	●	●	●
✓	3	Project Source Winchester Oak 2765 (Lowe's)	1.00	24	74	●	●	●	●	●
	4	Pergo Max Natural Oak 90870 (Lowe's)	3.00	18	62	●	●	●	●	●
	5	Armstrong Architectural Remnants Woodland Reclaim Old Original L3102	5.00	22	62	●	●	●	○	●

What the symbols mean ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

✓ CR Best Buy These products offer the best combination of performance and price. All are recommended.

✓ Recommended These are high-performing products that stand out.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is mainly resistance to foot traffic, scratches, dents, stains, sunlight, moisture, and slips. **Moisture resistance** (not shown) is based on a damp sponge left overnight and soaked samples (longer exposure). **Foot traffic** is how quickly surface wear was noticeable using an abrasion machine. **Scratches** denotes ability

to resist damage from a simulated dragged object. **Stains** is resistance to marring from grape juice, mustard, and other liquids left overnight. **Dents** is resistance to blunt and pointed objects dropped from different heights. **Sunlight (UV)** is resistance to color change after more than 300 hours of high ultraviolet levels. **Price per square foot** is approximate retail. **Square feet per box** is as claimed.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price (sq. ft.)	Sq. ft. per box	Overall score	Resists				
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.				Foot traffic	Scratches	Stains	Dents	Sunlight (UV)
					0 100 P F G VG E					

C LAMINATE continued

6	Pergo	XP Grand Oak LF000326 (Home Depot)	\$3.50	20	60	○	●	●	○	●
7	Mannington	Restoration Collection Chateau Sunset 22300	4.30	17	59	○	●	●	○	●
8	Pergo	Accolade Rustic Oak PJ2627	3.00	18	51	○	●	●	○	●
9	Shaw	Timberline SL247 Sawmill Hickory 255	5.00	18	47	○	○	●	●	●
10	SwiftLock Plus	Acappella Jatoba LX60300842 (Lowe's)	3.00	13	45	●	●	●	○	●
11	Home Legend	Jatoba HL89 (Home Depot)	3.00	13	43	●	●	●	○	○
12	Innovations	Sand Hickory FL904072 (Home Depot)	4.00	19	35	●	○	●	○	●

D VINYL Can usually be glued anywhere in the house.

✓ 1	Tarkett	NAFCO PermaStone Collection—Natural Slate-Sand Stone NS-660 ②	4.70	27	96	●	●	●	●	●
✓ 2	Congoleum	DuraCeramic Sierra Slate SI-74 Golden Greige ②	5.00	17	95	●	●	●	○	●
✓ 3	Armstrong	AlternA Mesa Stone Canyon Sun D4112 ②	5.50	25	90	●	●	○	○	●
✓ 4	Shaw	Matrix Regency Gunstock Oak LX90100706 (Lowe's)	2.00	28	81	●	○	●	○	●
✓ 5	Armstrong	LUXE Plank Timber Bay Barnyard Gray A6861	5.50	24	80	●	○	○	○	●
6	Congoleum	AirStep Evolution Colonial Plank Golden Tan 72012 ② ④ ⑤	4.00	Data not available	78	●	○	●	○	●
7	Mannington	Adura Essex Oak Natural AW511	5.00	15	78	○	●	●	○	●
8	Lumber Liquidators	Tranquility Antique Oak 10024424	2.90	20	74	○	●	●	○	●
9	Style Selections	Antique Oak WD4712 (Lowe's) ②	3.00	40	67	●	○	●	○	●
10	TrafficMaster	Allure Ultra Vintage Oak Cinnamon 517115 (Home Depot)	3.00	20	51	●	●	●	○	●
11	Armstrong	StrataMax Best Distressed Hickory 12 X3540 ② ④ ⑤	3.40	Varies	47	○	●	○	●	●

E LINOLEUM Can usually be glued or floated anywhere in the house.

✓ 1	Armstrong	Marmorette Oak Brown LP066 ② ④	4.50	Data not available	79	○	●	●	○	●
2	Forbo	Marmoleum Click Square Walnut 763874	8.00	7	62	○	●	●	○	●
3	Nova	Linoleum Klick 6615	6.00	18	35	○	○	○	○	○

F CERAMIC TILE Offers the look of traditional tile but costs less and is floated.

✓ 1	SnapStone	Beige 11-001-02-01 Beige 11-001-01-01	8.00	5	94	●	●	●	○	●
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① Bamboo product. ② Cannot be floated. ③ Cork product. ④ Not applicable; comes in sheets. ⑤ Loose lay installation; requires some adhesive or tape at edges and seams.

Fix the floor you have in three easy steps

Minor damage may even enhance the rustic look of distressed or hand-scraped floors by blending in with other patina, but you'll probably want to fix other flaws. Check the manufacturer's manual for any special instructions, then try these simple remedies for unwanted imperfections:

1. Mark it. A color-matched felt marker can hide small scratches in any floor. Some hardwood manufacturers even offer color-blended filler for chips and grooves, available at home centers and flooring stores.

2. Sand it. Badly worn or damaged wood floors must be refinished. But you can do spot repairs of wear or damage with light buffing or sanding, followed by staining.

Be especially careful with thin veneers on engineered-wood floors.

3. Replace only what's damaged. Heavy damage or a cracked stone tile usually requires chiseling out the damaged section and gluing in a new piece. But that's still easier than removing an entire row of tiles or planks if you've floated the floor.



Ariana Larix Fume tiles



Using a bold hue on the island can create a dramatic focal point.

Buying paint

Our top-performing products make giving your kitchen a new look easier than ever.

A weekend of work is all it takes to use fresh paint to make a big impact. And our latest tests revealed products that make painting even faster, and greener—for less. We also found that new formulas have improved certain paints but that others performed worse than they did just a year ago. The details:

Self-priming paints save work. Most of our top picks let you skip priming.

Paints that aren't self-priming are footnoted in the Ratings. For most surfaces, one coat of a recommended paint should be enough to hide most colors beneath.

You get what you pay for. Budget or "contractor" grade paint may cost less, but you'll end up putting on more coats for better hiding.

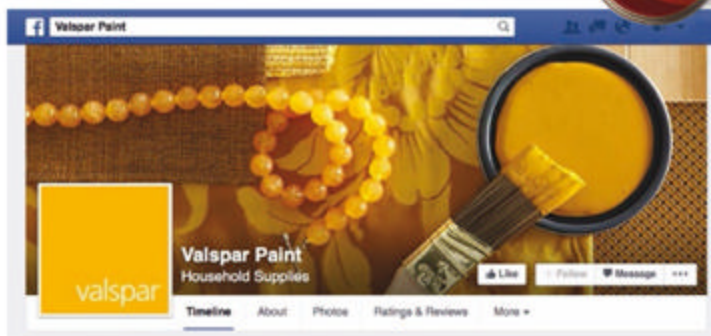
Lower emissions. More manufacturers are claiming that their paint

is free of volatile organic compounds, though the tints used to color the bases might have some VOCs. Those solvents, released into the air as paint dries, are linked to respiratory problems and air pollution. Most paint companies now say that their products contain 50 or fewer grams of VOCs per liter. But even those "green" formulations might not be entirely odor-free.

How to choose

Start shopping online.

Manufacturer and retailer websites and Facebook pages offer a wealth of tips on choosing colors, including photo galleries of finished rooms and calculators to help you figure out how much paint you'll need. They're also good places to check for such deals as free samples, moving discounts, and rebates if you don't like the color you've painted.



Choose the right sheen.

The best low-luster satin and eggshell paints offer easy hiding and durability, making them ideal for most surfaces. Flat paints hide flaws better but are less resistant to stains and smudges, so do not use them in kitchens. Semigloss works well for

trim, shelves and cabinets. But choose a semigloss that scored Very Good or Excellent in our gloss-change test to be sure that the shine won't dull with repeated cleanings. And select one that also did well in our sticking test, so cabinet doors and drawers won't stick shut, even after the paint is dry.



Get the color perfect.

Certain hues are specific to a brand. But retailers can often match colors. With paint-color formula books and color-matching computer technology, you don't have to rely on the skills of a sales clerk, though one with a good eye and mixing equipment with clean nozzles might be able to match colors, too. Because the paint base and sheen can differ slightly among brands, be sure to have the salesperson put a dab of the color on the paint chip or sample you've taken with you, then allow it to dry. Many retailers keep a hair dryer on hand for just that purpose.



Ratings

All tested products in performance order within types.

Rec.	Rank	Product	Price (per gal.)	Overall score	Test results					Resists			VOCs
					Hiding	Staining	Gloss change	Scrubbing	Smoothness	Mildew	Sticking	Fading	
				0 100									Zero claimed
				P F G V E									

A SATIN AND EGGSHELL Low sheen and general durability make these best for most surfaces.

✓	1	Behr Premium Plus Ultra Satin Enamel (Home Depot)	\$ 34	81	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
✓	2	Benjamin Moore Aura Satin ② ③	68	79	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	
✓	3	Clark+Kensington Satin Enamel (Ace)	32	79	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	
✓	4	Kilz Casual Colors Satin (Ace) ④	30	75	●	○	○	●	○	●	●	●	
✓	5	Behr Premium Plus Satin Enamel (Home Depot)	27	72	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	6	Glidden Premium Satin (Home Depot) ④	25	69	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	
	7	Olympic One Satin Enamel (Lowe's)	27	68	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	
	8	Valspar Signature Satin (Lowe's)	34	68	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	
	9	Benjamin Moore Natura Eggshell ④ ⑤	57	67	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
	10	Benjamin Moore Regal Select Eggshell ③ ⑤	50	67	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	11	Valspar Ultra Satin (Lowe's)	29	67	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	12	Sherwin-Williams Emerald Satin	63	66	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
	13	Glidden Duo Eggshell (Home Depot)	28	65	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	14	Olympic Icon Satin (Lowe's)	25	63	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	15	Ace Royal Interiors Satin ④	27	61	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	16	Glidden High Endurance Eggshell/Satin (Walmart) ③ ④	24	59	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
	17	Pittsburgh Paints Manor Hall Timeless Eggshell Plus ④	57	58	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
	18	True Value EasyCare Ultra Premium Satin	30	55	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●
	19	Glidden High Endurance Plus Eggshell/Satin (Walmart)	24	53	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	20	Sherwin-Williams Duration Home Satin	59	51	○	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●
	21	Farrow & Ball Estate Eggshell ④	105	49	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	22	True Value EasyCare Platinum Satin ②	33	48	○	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	●

B SEMIGLOSS Best for trim, doors, and windows if contrast in sheen is preferred.

✓	1	Clark+Kensington Semi-Gloss Enamel (Ace)	33	79	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	
✓	2	Behr Premium Plus Ultra Semi-Gloss Enamel (Home Depot)	34	78	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	
✓	3	Valspar Signature Semi-Gloss (Lowe's)	35	75	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	
✓	4	Behr Premium Plus Semi-Gloss Enamel (Home Depot)	29	74	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	●
✓	5	Benjamin Moore Aura Semi-Gloss ③	68	74	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	
	6	Ace Royal Interiors Semi-Gloss ④	28	70	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	7	Kilz Casual Colors Semi-Gloss ④	31	68	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	
	8	Olympic Icon Semi-Gloss (Lowe's)	26	68	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
	9	Glidden High Endurance Semi-Gloss (Walmart) ④	24	67	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	10	Glidden Premium Semi-Gloss (Home Depot) ④	26	67	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	
	11	Glidden High Endurance Plus Semi-Gloss (Walmart)	27	67	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	12	Olympic One Semi-Gloss Enamel (Lowe's)	27	67	●	○	○	●	○	●	●	●	●
	13	Benjamin Moore Natura Semi-Gloss ③ ④	57	67	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●

What the symbols mean ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

✓ CR Best Buy These products offer the best combination of performance and price. All are recommended.

✓ Recommended These are high-performing products that stand out.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is mainly hiding, surface smoothness, and resistance to staining, scrubbing, gloss change, sticking, mildew, and fading. Results reflect white, pastel, and medium-tint bases. **Hiding** is coverage of contrasting color mainly with one coat. **Staining** is resistance to water- and oil-based stains. **Gloss change** is appearance change after rough cleaning. **Scrubbing** is ability to resist an abrasive cleaner. **Smoothness** is the absence of roller marks when dry. **Resists mildew** is the ability to inhibit mildew growth. **Resists sticking** is ability to resist tackiness when dry. **Resists fading** is resistance to lightening from sun rays passing through a window. **Price** is approximate retail per gallon.

Rec.	Rank	Product	Price (per gal.)	Overall score	Test results					Resists			VOCs
					Hiding	Staining	Gloss change	Scrubbing	Smoothness	Mildew	Sticking	Fading	
				0 100 P F G V E									

B SEMIGLOSS continued

14	Glidden Duo Semi-Gloss (Home Depot)	\$ 29	66	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
15	Valspar Ultra Semi-Gloss (Lowe's)	30	64	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
16	Benjamin Moore Regal Select Semi-Gloss ^③	50	63	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
17	Pittsburgh Paints Manor Hall Timeless Semi-Gloss ^④	58	59	●	○	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●
18	Sherwin-Williams Emerald Semi-Gloss	65	59	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
19	Farrow & Ball Full Gloss ^④	105	56	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
20	Sherwin-Williams Duration Home Semi-Gloss	60	56	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●
21	True Value EasyCare Ultra Premium Semi-Gloss	30	52	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●
22	True Value EasyCare Platinum Semi-Gloss	34	49	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●

① Volatile organic compounds. ② Glossier than labeled. ③ Manufacturer claims that paint has been reformulated since our last tests, though product in Ratings is still available in stores.

④ Not self-priming. ⑤ Flatter than labeled.

Have painting questions? Our experts have the answers.

How should I paint the ceiling?

A After removing dust and dirt, use a small sash brush with flagged or split ends to cut in a strip of 2 inches or so around the edges of the ceiling. When choosing a brush, note that synthetic bristles tend to hold latex-based paint better and apply it more evenly than natural bristles. Then switch to a roller with an extension pole. Start in a corner and work across the shorter dimension of the room. For even coverage, paint a “W” or “M” pattern about 3 feet wide with the roller, then fill in the gaps. (The process works for walls, too.)

How can I prevent roller marks?

A Avoid cheap rollers with obvious seams. Synthetic, short-napped rollers work best on most walls, ceilings, and trim. Use longer-nap rollers for textured walls. Steel frames with lots of tines will be stiffer and sturdier, and sealed ends will keep the paint on the roller. Be sure to give a new roller a rubdown before use to remove any lint. The paint you use matters, too, so look for high smoothness scores in our Ratings.

What if I missed a spot?

A After the paint dries, usually in about 4 hours, touch it up. If you do it before the paint dries, you'll mess up the paint surrounding the bare spot.

Can I fix paint runs?

A Once the paint is dry, use fine sandpaper to remove the run, then retouch with a little paint. Runs can be a sign that you're loading too much paint on the roller or brush or not spreading it well.

Can I trash unused paint?

A You should always keep a little for touch-ups. Pour it into a small container and label it with the paint color

and number, and the room it was used in. You can try contacting local charities, religious organizations, or high school or college drama departments to ask whether they can use extra paint, or check whether your community collects it for reuse. If you don't find any takers, follow local waste requirements for proper disposal (such as taking the lid off latex paint and letting it dry before disposing of the can).



Painter's tape can help you create crisp lines between colors or around trim. In our tests, FrogTape Delicate Surface Tape, \$6 to \$9, was easy to use and didn't damage surfaces.



Some models like this one from Samsung have door-in-door access to some fresh foods.

Cool fridges

The best big chillers hold more of your family's food, boast extras designed for entertaining, and use less energy, too.



KitchenAid

Refrigerators are becoming more social. Some of the latest models have party-enhancing features, such as Bluetooth-enabled sound systems, wine-chilling compartments, and dispensers that serve more than just water. But it's the day-in, day-out performance that matters most, and that's what our tests are designed to capture.

Four-door models flood the market. Most of these models feature a middle drawer, often with separate temperatures controls. Samsung introduced the first truly four-door model, the Samsung T9000, which has abundant usable capacity, along with outstanding overall performance.

Fridges are bigger, with more features. Space ranks right up there with style on most shoppers' refrigerator

wish lists. We're seeing more models that claim more than 30 cubic feet of capacity, and some boast upwards of 33 cubic feet. High-end features, such as temperature controlled drawers, adjustable shelves, split shelves, and internal water dispensers, are increasingly available on even the most affordable refrigerators.

But small is beautiful, too. We're also seeing more refrigerators designed for smaller spaces. Column refrigerators, which range from about 18 to 30 inches wide and don't include a freezer, fit spots too narrow for most refrigerator-freezers. You can also pair one with a column freezer, available in similar widths, for added flexibility. Manufacturers are also squeezing a bottom-freezer design into a svelte 30-inch width.



Built-in models like this one from Jenn-Air have a sleek look.



Bottom-freezers, like this one from Amana, keep fresh food at eye level.

Details that count



■ Water filter

It can remove small particles or contaminants such as lead and chlorine, and impurities that cause bad tastes or odors. You can also add a filter to the refrigerator's water-supply line.

■ Digital controls with temperature readouts

These are more precise than dial controls and can include readouts in degrees for the refrigerator and the freezer compartments.

■ LED lighting

LEDs take up less space than incandescent lightbulbs, use less energy, and can be placed to uniformly light the interior.

■ Special shelves

Adjustable door bins and shelves move to create room to fit tall items. Elevator shelves let you crank them up and down without removing their contents. Pull-out shelves or bins improve access to stored items. Split shelves allow you to adjust them to different heights independently.

■ Drawers that control humidity

Crisper drawers are available in all but basic refrigerator models, some with controls that maintain optimum humidity levels. Some models also have temperature-controlled drawers that you can set cooler than the rest of the refrigerator. (You might want to keep meat, fish, and cold cuts at lower temperatures.) Some drawers can also chill or thaw their contents quickly.

■ Dual evaporators

This feature helps maintain optimum temperature and moisture levels in the fresh-food section. It also prevents food odors from migrating between the refrigerator and freezer compartments.

■ Through-the-door dispensers

Ice and water dispensers are included in some French-door models and in almost all side-by-sides. Our latest reliability survey indicates that refrigerators with this convenient feature are slightly more repair-prone than those without it.

■ Multimedia combos

As the kitchen becomes the new living room, more manufacturers are hawking \$3,000-plus refrigerators that incorporate high-tech equipment such as TVs, digital-picture or music devices, and family-organizing centers. You can save hundreds and get better performance by buying such equipment separately.



How to choose

Forget claimed capacity.

As with most fridges, even the Samsung Chef Collection RF34H9960S4 (right), which has the most capacity of any model we've tested (almost 23.4 cu. ft.), has less usable capacity than its claims suggest. That's because companies usually include unusable nooks and crannies in those claims.

Check the dimensions.

Any size refrigerator might work if you're remodeling the kitchen. Otherwise, carefully measure your space and the room you have for door swings to be sure that the new fridge will fit. For example, though Samsung's Chef Collection features narrow, space-saving door swings, it's also a few inches taller and deeper than some French-door models.



Look for space savers.

Features that maximize storage space include slim in-door icemakers, which free up the top shelf, along with adjustable or split shelves, which make room for water bottles and other taller items. Temperature-controlled bins also let you keep meat, cold cuts, and fish several degrees colder than the rest of the refrigerator.

Repair or replace?

The survey examined products through the first eight years of ownership.

TOP-FREEZER		
1-4 yr. REPAIR	5-7 yr. CONSIDER REPAIR	8+ yr. REPLACE
Median repair cost \$152 TIP Top-freezers are the least expensive type; if your fridge is 5 to 7 years old, you should lean toward replacing it.		

BOTTOM-FREEZER	
1-6 yr. REPAIR	7-8 yr. CONSIDER REPAIR
Median repair cost \$216 TIP Models with an icemaker fail more often than those without one.	

SIDE-BY-SIDE	
1-5 yr. REPAIR	6-8 yr. CONSIDER REPAIR
Median repair cost \$194 TIP Side-by-sides are the most finicky type of refrigerator.	

Product guide



TOP-FREEZER

Pros They usually offer the most storage for their size, and fairly wide refrigerator shelves make it easy to reach the back. They also cost the least as a group, yet they offer stainless trim on many models for a more stylish look.

Cons You have to bend to reach lower shelves and drawers, and the wide-swinging door requires sufficient clearance between adjacent surfaces.



SIDE-BY-SIDE

Pros The narrow doors are a plus in a space-challenged kitchen.

Cons Most doors don't open wide enough for a pizza box or other wide items, and tall, narrow compartments make items toward the back hard to find—concerns that have helped boost sales of French-door bottom-freezer models. Side-by-sides are usually not as energy- or space-efficient.



BUILT-IN

Pros These offer the sleekest look. And most can accept optional front panels that match cabinets and other elements of your kitchen design.

Cons Built-in refrigerators are the least space-efficient and the priciest overall. And almost all are wide (36 inches or more) but relatively shallow—25 or 26 inches front to back—contributing to their relatively small space and energy efficiency overall. Their usable capacity tends to be comparable or even less than smaller refrigerators.



BOTTOM-FREEZER

Pros French-door models keep refrigerated food at eye level, and offer the space-saving door swing of a side-by-side and the option of opening only half of the refrigerator at a time. Four-door versions add the convenience of an extra refrigerator or freezer drawer. More now have in-door ice and water dispensers.

Cons You have to bend to reach the freezer



compartment, though you'll typically use the refrigerator more often. Bottom-freezer fridges cost more than top-freezers overall. French-door and four-door models can cost even more and can be hard to find in narrow widths. Be wary of models with through-the-door ice and water dispensers, an admittedly convenient feature that can require pricey repairs.



CABINET-DEPTH

Pros These stick out only a bit farther than built-in models and deliver their integrated, upscale look for far less. But because they don't accept cabinet panels, these models can't deliver a truly seamless look.

Cons Cabinet-depth models have less usable space than deeper freestanding models and cost more overall than other freestanding fridges.

RECOMMENDED MODELS

Top-freezers



A1 GE GTSKBWW

Size tested 68Hx33Wx32D

Price \$1,300

This model provides superb temperature performance and very good energy efficiency. It provides 11.8 cubic feet of usable storage, and 5.3 cubic feet in the freezer. And it offers a nice array of features, including spillproof shelves, digital controls, and a snack drawer. geappliances.com



A2 Haier HT21TS45SW

✓ **CR Best Buy**

Size tested 66Hx32Wx32D

Price \$800

This 20.7-cu.-ft. model delivers exceptional value, with its solid temperature performance and exceptional energy efficiency. Inside, it offers gallon door storage and spillproof shelves. It's also available in stainless steel. haier.com/us



A3 Frigidaire FFHT2126PS

Size tested 69Hx30Wx32D

Price \$800

This model is one of our highest-rated top-freezers, thanks to its solid temperature and energy efficiency. It also serves up nearly 17 feet of usable capacity, impressive for this type of refrigerator. The interior is basic box design. frigidaire.com

Bottom-freezers: conventional



B1 Kenmore Elite 79043

Size tested 69Hx33Wx33D

Price \$1,510

Superb temperature performance and exceptional energy efficiency and noise level helped this 23.8-cu.-ft. model earn a top spot on our recommended list. Other pluses include digital shelves, spillproof shelves, and a door-open alarm. kenmore.com



B2 LG LDC24370ST

Size tested 69Hx33Wx33D

Price \$1,650

This model boasts 17.1 cubic feet of total usable capacity, along with excellent temperature performance, energy efficiency, and noise level. It includes digital controls, spillproof shelves, and a door-open alarm. lg.com



B3 Kenmore Elite 79023

Size tested 70Hx33Wx31D

Price \$1,450

This 21.8-cu.-ft. (15.9 actual) model provides excellent temperature performance and energy efficiency. Other pluses include spillproof shelves, digital controls, and a door-open alarm. kenmore.com

RECOMMENDED MODELS

Bottom-freezers: French-door



C1 GE Profile PWE23KMEDES

Size tested 69Hx36Wx29D

Price \$2,600

This quiet, cabinet-depth model provides exceptional temperature control and energy efficiency. It offers an internal water dispenser, dual evaporators, a built-in water filter, spillproof shelves, and a temp-controlled meat/deli bin.

geappliances.com



C2 LG LFX32945ST

Size tested 69Hx36Wx35D

Price \$3,330

This model, with 22 cubic feet of usable capacity, provides a door-in-door compartment, allowing you to access drinks, condiments, and other often-needed items without reaching into the main chamber. It provides superb performance in our tests of temperature control, energy efficiency, and noise.

lg.com



C3 Samsung RF30HDEDTSR

Size tested 69Hx36Wx35D

Price \$3,000

This 30.2-cu.-ft. model provides top-rated temperature performance, energy efficiency and noise level. It features a door-in-door compartment, an external water dispenser, dual evaporators, built-in water filter, ice storage in its refrigerator, and digital controls.

samsung.com



C4 Kenmore Elite 7160[3]

✓ **CR Best Buy**

Size tested 69Hx36Wx32D

Price \$1,700

This fridge, with 25 cubic feet of storage, is one of the most energy-efficient models in its category. It has pull-out shelves and bins, a temperature-controlled meat/deli compartment, and touchpad controls. It's one of the quietest models in our Ratings.

kenmore.com



C5 LG LFX33975ST

Size tested 69Hx36Wx35D

Price \$3,000

Boasting 33 claimed cubic feet of storage, this spacious model offers digital controls, spillproof shelves, gallon door storage, and external ice and water dispensers.

lg.com

Bottom-freezers: French-door



C6 LG LFX29937ST

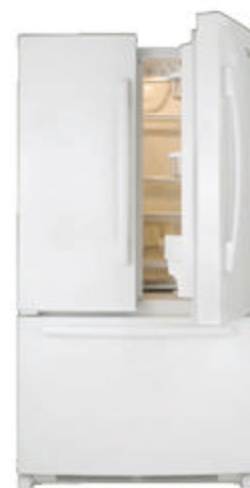
Size tested

69Hx36Wx34D

Price \$2,700

This model provides exceptional temperature control, energy efficiency, and noise. Its many helpful features include an extra-tall ice and water dispenser that make it easy to fill pitchers and other oversized containers. Inside the refrigerator, dual evaporators should help keep food fresh by maintaining optimal humidity levels.

lg.com



C7 Whirlpool Gold GX5FHTXV[Q]

 **CR Best Buy**

Size tested 70Hx36Wx33D

Price \$1,600

This model boasts excellent temperature control and energy efficiency. But it's somewhat noisy. It offers pull-out shelves and bins, a temperature-controlled meat/deli compartment, an internal water dispenser with built-in filtration, and touch-pad controls.

whirlpool.com



C8 Samsung RF28HDEDBSR

Size tested 70Hx36Wx37D

Price \$2,400

This model offers a quite spacious 20 cubic feet of usable capacity. Features include adjustable shelves, gallon door storage, spill-proof shelves, and dual evaporators. In terms of performance, the fridge delivers superb temperature control, and we also found it be exceptionally energy efficient.

samsung.com



C9 LG LFX29927ST

Size tested 70Hx36Wx34D

Price \$2,350

This 29.2-cu.-ft. model provides exceptional temperature control and noise. As for features, it offers an extra-tall ice and water dispenser that make it easy to fill pitchers and other oversized containers. Inside the refrigerator, dual evaporators should help keep food fresh by maintaining optimal humidity levels.

lg.com



C10 Samsung RF26HFPNBSR

Size tested 73Hx36Wx36D

Price \$2,300

This 25.5-cu.-ft. model provides excellent temperature performance and energy efficiency, along with good noise and crisper performance. It offers an internal water dispenser, built-in water filter, dual evaporators and digital controls.

samsung.com

RECOMMENDED MODELS

Expert's
pick



“A top-rated four-door model, the Samsung Chef Collection RF34H9960S4 bottom-freezer refrigerator, has 23.4 cubic feet of usable capacity, the most of any fridge we’ve tested. One particularly cool feature: The user can convert the lower-right compartment from freezer to fridge with the touch of a button.”

—Joe Pacella, Project Leader

D1 Samsung Chef Collection RF34H9960S4

Size tested 73Hx36Wx36D

Price \$5,400

samsung.com



D2 Samsung T9000 RF32FMQDBSR

Size tested 72Hx36Wx36D

Price \$3,500

This model offers 22.9 cubic feet of usable capacity, which is among the most we’ve ever measured. It’s a true four-door refrigerator, with an upper fresh-food section behind traditional French-doors and two side-by-side bottom freezer compartments, one of which can convert to an additional refrigerator chamber.

samsung.com

Most & least reliable brands

80,000 readers sound off

TOP FREEZERS

ICEMAKER	
Kenmore	13%
Maytag	15%
Frigidaire	16%
GE	19%
Whirlpool	19%
NO ICEMAKER	
Kenmore	10%
Whirlpool	11%
GE	11%
Frigidaire	12%

BOTTOM FREEZERS

ICEMAKER	
Samsung	18%
Kenmore	19%
LG	19%
GE	19%
Maytag	22%
Whirlpool	25%
KitchenAid	26%
Frigidaire	35%
Electrolux	45%
NO ICEMAKER	
Kenmore	12%
GE	15%
Whirlpool	21%
Amana	24%

SIDE-BY-SIDES WITH ICEMAKER

GE	18%
Kenmore	20%
Frigidaire	21%
Whirlpool	21%
Maytag	22%
LG	22%
Samsung	23%
KitchenAid	29%

Source: Consumer Reports Annual Product Reliability Survey. Our findings are based on almost 80,000 refrigerators that readers bought new between 2010 and 2014. Differences of fewer than 5 points aren’t meaningful. Models within a brand may vary, and design and manufacture changes may affect future reliability.

Side-by-sides



E1 Samsung RS25H5121SR

Size tested 69Hx36Wx34D

Price \$1,900

This 24.5 cu.-ft. (claimed) model offers outstanding temperature performance, energy efficiency, and quiet operation. It's also loaded with features, including an innovative ice and water dispenser and dual evaporators, which should help keep food fresh by maintaining optimal humidity levels.

samsung.com



Tip

SPACE SAVER A side-by-side model is a particularly good choice in a tight space, where the wider door swing of a top-freezer or standard bottom-freezer could obstruct passageways or make it difficult to open cabinet or dishwasher doors. Whichever style of fridge you choose, be sure to take careful measurements to ensure adequate clearance for the doors.



E2 Samsung RH29H8000SR

Size tested 70Hx36Wx34D

Price \$2,500

This 28.5-cu.-ft. refrigerator has an external water dispenser, a built-in water filter, an air filter, spillproof shelves, digital temperature controls, and dual evaporators. A very quiet model, it provides very good temperature and energy-efficiency.

samsung.com



E4 Samsung RS22HDHPNSR

Size tested 69Hx36Wx33D

Price \$2,400

This 22.3-cu.-ft. cabinet-depth model combines very good temperature control and quietness with superb energy efficiency. In terms of features, it offers through-the-door ice and water, as well as dual evaporators, which should help keep food fresh by maintaining optimal humidity levels.

samsung.com

RECOMMENDED MODELS

Built-ins



F1 Thermador Freedom Collection T36BB820SS

Size tested 84Hx36Wx25D

Price \$7,400

This 20-cu.-ft. model provides excellent temperature and noise performance, and very good energy efficiency. It has dual compressors, dual evaporators, a door-open alarm, a built-in water filter, and digital temperature controls.

thermador.com



F2 Jenn-Air JS42PPDUB[SS]

Size tested 84Hx42Wx26D

Price \$7,200

This 25.3-cu.-ft. model offers very good temperature performance, superb energy efficiency, and quiet operation. It has a temperature-controlled meat and deli bin. It also has through-the-door ice and water dispensers, which means that the refrigerator can't accept an integrated panel.

jenn-air.com



F3 Bosch Integra 800 Series B36BT830NS

Size tested 84Hx36Wx25D

Price \$7,500

This 20-cu.-ft. model provides excellent temperature and noise performance, but energy efficiency is only good. It has dual compressors, dual evaporators, a door-open alarm, a built-in water filter, and digital controls.

boschappliances.com



F4 Thermador Freedom Collection T36BT810NS

Size tested 84Hx36Wx25D

Price \$8,000

This 20-cu.-ft. cabinet-depth model provides excellent temperature and noise performance, and good energy efficiency. It has dual compressors, dual evaporators, a door-open alarm, a built-in water filter, and digital controls.

thermador.com



F5 Thermador KBUDT4265E[S]

Size tested 84Hx42Wx26D

Price \$8,750

This model combines very good temperature performance and energy efficiency. It has through-the-door ice and water dispensers, so the refrigerator can't accept an integrated panel. It comes with a temperature-controlled meat/deli bin and gallon door storage.

thermador.com



F6 Sub-Zero BI42S[S]

Size tested 84Hx42Wx26D

Price \$8,000

This 24.1-cu.-ft. model provides excellent temperature performance; energy efficiency, and noise and crisper performance are very good. It has a chemical air-scrubber, dual compressors, dual evaporators, a door-open alarm, a built-in water filter, spillproof shelves, and digital controls that show actual temperature.

subzero-wolf.com

Ratings All tested products in performance order.

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results										Features			
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.		<div><div></div><div>0100</div><div>P F G VG E</div></div>	Temperature performance	Energy efficiency	Noise	Ease of use	Energy cost/yr. (\$)	Total usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Fridge usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Freezer usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Exterior height (in.)	Exterior width (in.)	Exterior depth (in.)	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Water dispenser	Stainless/SS-look option

A TOP FREEZERS

✓	1	GE GTS22KBPWW	\$1,300	69	●	●	○	○	64	17.1	11.8	5.3	68	33	32	21.7	int.	•
✓	2	Haier HT21TS45SW	800	65	●	●	●	●	53	17.5	12.7	4.8	67	32	32	20.7		•
✓	3	Frigidaire FFHT2126PS	850	64	●	●	○	●	55	16.9	12.1	4.8	69	30	32	20.5		•
✓	4	Haier HT21TS77SP	700	63	●	●	○	●	47	17.6	12.7	4.9	67	32	32	20.7		•
✓	5	Haier HT18TS77SP	600	63	●	●	○	●	41	15.4	11	4.4	66	30	31	18.2		•
✓	6	Frigidaire LFHT2117L[W] (Lowe's) FFHT2117L[W]	700	62	●	●	●	●	55	17.1	12.3	4.8	69	30	34	20.5		•
✓	7	Kenmore 79433	1,400	62	○	●	●	●	54	19.4	13.8	5.6	69	33	32	23.5	int.	•
✓	8	Maytag MITXEGMY[W]	770	62	●	●	○	●	59	16.7	10.9	5.8	66	33	31	20.4		•
	9	LG LTC24380ST	1,150	61	○	●	●	●	50	19.6	14	5.6	69	33	32	23.8		•
	10	GE GT221GCESS	1,300	61	●	●	○	●	59	17.1	11.8	5.3	66	33	31	21		•
	11	Frigidaire Gallery FGHT1848PF Gallery FGHT1832PF	850	61	●	●	○	●	52	14.1	10.6	3.5	67	30	31	18.3		•
	12	Kenmore 78032	1,200	61	○	●	●	●	52	19.6	14	5.6	69	33	32	23.7		•
	13	LG LTC20380ST	1,000	61	○	●	●	●	46	16.4	11.4	5	66	30	32	20.2		•
	14	Ikea Energisk B18W	500	59	○	●	○	○	52	13.7	9.9	3.8	69	28	32	17.6		•
	15	Frigidaire FFHT1725PS	700	57	○	●	○	●	49	13.2	9.9	3.3	66	28	30	16.5		•
	16	GE GTH17JBX[WW]	550	54	○	●	●	●	41	13.1	9.1	4	65	28	30	16.5		•
	17	Frigidaire FRT18L4J[W] (Lowe's) FFTR1817L[], FFTR1814L[]	520	47	●	○	●	●	68	15.4	11.8	3.6	66	30	32	18.2		•
	18	Whirlpool WRT138TFY[W]	680	45	○	●	●	●	51	15.1	10.1	5	67	30	32	18.1		•
	19	Whirlpool W8RXEGMW[Q]	720	45	○	●	●	●	58	13.7	10.2	3.5	69	28	30	17.5		•
	20	Daewoo FRG-1830BRW	750	44	○	○	○	●	67	14.5	10	4.5	67	30	31	18		•
	21	Whirlpool WRT311FZBM	840	43	●	●	●	●	57	17.4	11.5	5.9	66	33	31	20.6		•
	22	Whirlpool WRT771RWY[W]	940	43	●	●	●	○	50	17.7	11.6	6.1	66	33	34	21.1	int.	•
	23	GE GTH18GBD[WW]	600	41	●	●	○	●	49	13.9	10.2	3.7	68	28	31	18.1		•
	24	GE GTH20JBB[WW]	810	41	●	●	○	●	42	14.1	9.6	4.5	67	30	33	19.9		•
	25	Frigidaire FFTR2126L[W]	720	40	○	○	○	●	85	17.1	12.3	4.8	69	30	34	20.5		•
	26	Whirlpool WRT311SFY[W]	720	40	○	○	○	●	83	16.9	11.5	5.4	67	33	33	21.1		•
	27	Maytag M9BXXGMY[W]	800	39	●	●	○	●	45	15.8	10.9	4.9	66	30	34	18.9		•
	28	Maytag M1BXXGMY[M]	950	32	●	●	○	●	52	17.7	11.7	6	66	30	33	21.1		•

B CONVENTIONAL BOTTOM-FREEZERS

✓	1	Kenmore Elite 79043	1,510	83	●	●	●	○	59	17.1	12.3	4.8	69	33	33	23.8		•
✓	2	LG LDC24370ST	1,650	83	●	●	●	○	59	17.1	12.3	4.8	69	33	33	23.8		•
✓	3	Kenmore Elite 79023	1,450	81	●	●	●	○	58	15.8	10.9	4.9	69	30	34	21.8		•

What the symbols mean ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

✓ CR Best Buy These models offer the best combination of performance and price. All are recommended.

✓ Recommended These are high-performing models that stand out.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is based primarily on temperature performance and energy efficiency. Noise and ease of use are also considered.

Temperature performance denotes performance at different room temperatures, including high heat, and how uniformly each model maintained 37° F in the refrigerator and 0° F in the freezer. **Energy efficiency** is energy consumption per usable cubic foot of storage as observed in the energy test we perform in-house at 37° F in the refrigerator and 0° F in the freezer. **Noise** is with compressors running. **Ease of use** assesses features and design, including layout, controls,

and lighting. **Energy cost/yr. (\$)** is the estimated cost in dollars based on the current year's average national electricity rate. Your cost will vary depending on the rate for electricity in your area. **Fridge** and **freezer usable capacity** is our measurement of usable refrigerator and freezer space. **Height, width, and depth** are without the model's handle, rounded up to the nearest inch (37-inch-wide freestanding models fit in 36-inch openings). **Claimed capacity** is the manufacturer's measurement of cubic feet. Under **brand & model**, bracketed letters or numbers are color codes. **Price** is approximate retail.

Ratings

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results										Features			
					Temperature performance	Energy efficiency	Noise	Ease of use	Energy cost/yr. (\$)	Total usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Fridge usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Freezer usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Exterior height (in.)	Exterior width (in.)	Exterior depth (in.)	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Water dispenser	Stainless/SS-look option

B CONVENTIONAL BOTTOM-FREEZERS continued

✓	4	Kenmore 69313	\$ 950	80	●	●	●	●	44	13.4	8.9	4.5	66	30	31	18.5	•	
✓	5	Whirlpool WRB322DMBM	1,400	77	●	●	○	●	54	14.9	10.7	4.2	69	33	31	22.1	•	
✓	6	Whirlpool Gold GB2FHDWQ	1,200	73	●	●	●	●	52	15.3	11.1	4.2	70	33	31	21.9	•	
✓	7	Amana ABB2221WE[W] ABB2224WE[]	1,000	73	●	●	○	●	56	16.5	11.4	5.1	70	33	32	21.9	•	
✓	8	Maytag MBF2258XE[W] MBL2258XE[], MBR2258XE[]	1,100	73	●	●	○	●	52	15.4	11.3	4.1	70	33	31	21.9	•	
✓	9	Amana ABB2224BRM	1,250	72	●	●	○	●	56	15.3	11.1	4.2	69	33	31	21.9	•	
✓	10	Maytag MBF1958XE[W]	1,150	72	●	●	○	●	50	12.8	9.2	3.6	67	30	31	18.5	•	
	11	Samsung RB215AC[PN]	1,350	71	●	●	○	●	65	15	10.6	4.4	69	32	30	19.7	•	
	12	Whirlpool GB9FHDW[S]	1,500	71	●	●	●	●	50	12.3	9.1	3.2	66	30	32	18.5	•	
	13	LG LDC2272Q[SW]	1,300	71	●	●	●	●	61	15.8	11.3	4.5	69	33	33	22.4	•	
	14	Amana ABB1924BRM	1,220	71	●	●	○	●	51	12.5	8.9	3.6	66	30	31	18.5	•	
	15	Whirlpool EB9SHKXV[Q]	1,050	69	●	●	○	●	56	13.5	9.2	4.3	67	30	31	18.5	•	
	16	Kenmore 7827[2]	1,050	68	●	●	●	●	66	17.1	11.5	5.6	68	33	33	22.4	•	
	17	Samsung RB195AC[PN]	1,250	68	●	○	●	○	65	13.8	9.9	3.9	69	32	29	17.9	•	
	18	KitchenAid KBR519KCMS	1,700	67	●	○	●	○	63	12.1	8.6	3.5	67	30	31	18.7	•	
	19	Blomberg BRFB1800SSIM	1,800	67	●	●	●	○	57	13.6	9.8	3.8	68	30	30	16.2	•	
	20	Amana ABB1921WE[W]	850	67	●	○	●	●	69	13.2	9	4.2	68	30	31	18.5	•	
	21	Kenmore 7900[2]	900	67	●	●	●	●	66	15	9.9	5.1	68	30	33	19.7	•	
	22	GE GDE23ESES	1,700	65	●	●	○	●	71	17	12.7	4.3	68	36	33	23.1	•	
	23	GE Artistry ABE20EGWS	1,100	58	●	●	○	●	60	14.9	10.4	4.5	67	30	33	20.3	•	
	24	Fisher & Paykel RF175WCRUX1 RF175WDRX1, RF175WDRUX1, RF175WCRX1	2,000	48	○	●	●	○	65	12.4	9.4	3	69	33	28	17.5	ext.	•
	25	Haier HBQ18JAD[W]	900	43	●	●	●	●	76	14.9	10.4	4.5	66	30	32	17.5	•	

C THREE-DOOR FRENCH-DOOR BOTTOM-FREEZERS

✓	1	GE Profile PWE23KMDES	2,600	84	●	●	●	●	47	16	11.1	4.9	69	36	29	23.1	int.	•
✓	2	LG LFX32945ST	3,330	84	●	●	●	●	71	21.6	14.9	6.7	69	36	35	32	ext.	•
✓	3	Samsung RF30HDEDTSR	3,000	83	●	●	●	●	81	20.9	14.1	6.8	69	36	35	30.2	ext.	•
✓	4	Kenmore 7160[3]	1,700	83	●	●	●	○	52	17.5	12.5	5	69	36	32	25	•	
✓	5	LG LFX33975ST	3,000	83	●	●	●	●	71	22.3	15.6	6.7	69	36	35	32.5	ext.	•
✓	6	LG LFX29937ST	2,700	83	●	●	●	●	63	18.7	12.6	6.1	69	36	34	29.2	ext.	•
✓	7	Whirlpool Gold GX5FHTXV[Q] Gold GX5FHDV[]	1,600	82	●	●	○	●	60	16.2	11.6	4.6	70	36	33	24.8	•	
✓	8	Samsung RF28HDEDBSR	2,400	82	●	●	●	●	62	20	13.3	6.7	69	36	34	27.8	ext.	•
✓	9	LG LFX29927ST	2,350	82	●	●	●	●	79	19.3	13.1	6.2	70	36	34	29.2	ext.	•
✓	10	Samsung RF26HFPNBSR	2,300	82	●	●	○	●	55	18.3	13.3	5	69	36	33	25.5	int.	•
✓	11	LG LFC24770ST	1,900	81	●	●	●	●	55	17.4	12.6	4.8	69	33	33	23.8	•	
✓	12	Samsung RFG298HD[RS] (Lowe's) RFG297HD[], RFG296HD[]	2,800	81	●	●	●	●	74	18.6	12.7	5.9	69	36	35	28.5	ext.	•
✓	13	LG LFC25776[SW]	1,650	81	●	●	●	○	51	18	13	5	70	36	33	25	•	
✓	14	Samsung RF323TEDB[SR]	3,300	80	●	●	●	○	73	21.8	14.7	7.1	69	36	36	31.6	ext.	•
✓	15	Kenmore Elite 72193	4,150	80	●	●	●	●	77	21.7	15	6.7	69	36	35	32	ext.	•
✓	16	LG LFX31925[ST] LFX31915ST	2,900	79	●	●	●	●	73	19.4	13.4	6	69	36	34	31	ext.	•
✓	17	Kenmore Elite 71313	1,600	79	●	●	●	○	59	17.4	12.6	4.8	69	33	33	23.9	•	
	18	GE Café CFE29TSDSS	3,000	78	●	●	●	●	72	19.6	13.2	6.4	69	36	36	28.6	ext.	•
	19	Samsung RF261BEAE[SR]	1,700	78	●	●	○	●	57	18.6	13.4	5.2	69	36	35	25.5	int.	•
	20	LG LFC25765[ST]	1,800	78	●	●	●	○	60	17.9	12.6	5.3	69	33	34	25	•	

☒ CR Best Buy
 ☒ Recommended
 ☒ Excellent
 ☒ Very good
 ☐ Good
 ☐ Fair
 ☐ Poor

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results										Features			
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Temperature performance	Energy efficiency	Noise	Ease of use	Energy cost/yr. (\$)	Total usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Fridge usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Freezer usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Exterior height (in.)	Exterior width (in.)	Exterior depth (in.)	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Water dispenser	Stainless/SS-look option

C THREE-DOOR FRENCH-DOOR BOTTOM-FREEZERS continued

21	Kenmore Elite 7205[3]	\$3,200	78						75	19.4	13.4	6	71	36	35	31	ext.	•
22	LG LFX25991[ST]	3,200	77						60	14	9.5	4.5	69	36	29	24.5	ext.	•
23	Whirlpool WRF5325MBM	1,600	77						50	15.2	10.9	4.3	69	33	32	21.7		•
24	Samsung RF28HFEDBSR	2,650	77						88	20	13.3	6.7	69	36	34	28.1	ext.	•
25	GE GNE26GSDSS	1,800	76						58	20	13.8	6.2	70	36	34	26.4		•
26	GE Café CYE23TSDSS	3,100	76						67	14.7	9.9	4.8	70	36	30	23	ext.	•
27	GE GFE27GSDSS	2,400	75						61	17.6	11.9	5.7	69	36	34	26.6	ext.	•
28	LG LFX31945[ST]	2,800	75						79	19	13	6	69	36	34	30.5	ext.	•
29	Kenmore Elite 7206[3]	2,900	75						81	19.1	13.1	6	69	36	34	30.5	ext.	•
30	LG LFC22770ST	1,800	75						71	15.4	11.1	4.3	68	30	33	21.8		•
31	Amana AFI2538AE[W]	1,800	75						72	14.8	10.7	4.1	71	36	32	24.9	•	•
32	GE Profile PFE29PSD[SS]	2,400	74						72	19.6	13.2	6.4	69	36	36	28.6	ext.	•
33	Samsung RF221NCTA[SR]	1,800	74						57	15.6	11.1	4.5	66	30	34	21.6	int.	•
34	LG LFX21976[ST]	3,000	74						63	13.5	9.7	3.8	70	36	28	21	ext.	•
35	Kenmore 71323	2,100	74						62	15.3	11	4.3	68	30	33	21.8	ext.	•
36	Samsung RF263BEAE[SR]	2,000	74						61	17.1	12	5.1	69	36	35	25.6	ext.	•
37	Frigidaire Gallery FGHB2878L[P]	2,300	74						70	17.4	11.8	5.6	70	36	34	27.8	ext.	•
38	Frigidaire FFHN2740PS	1,800	74						54	19.1	13.9	5.2	70	36	34	26.5		•
39	Maytag MFT2673BEM	2,200	73						65	16.5	11.7	4.8	69	36	34	26.1	ext.	•
40	Whirlpool WRF5355MBM	1,500	73						59	17.4	12.5	4.9	69	36	34	24.8		•
41	Frigidaire FFHB2740PS	2,100	73						74	17.5	12.6	4.9	69	36	34	26.6	ext.	•
42	LG LFX25974[ST] LFX25973ST	2,300	72						75	16.2	11.2	5	69	36	33	24.7	ext.	•
43	Kenmore 7200[2]	1,650	72						61	14.6	10.4	4.2	70	33	32	21.7	int.	•
44	Samsung RF217AC[WP]	1,450	71						68	14.9	10.4	4.5	70	32	30	19.7		•
45	Jenn-Air JFC2290V[EP]	2,800	71						57	13.5	10.4	3.1	72	36	28	21.8	int.	•
46	Kenmore Elite 72373	2,400	71						72	19.3	13.1	6.2	70	36	34	29	ext.	•
47	Maytag MFI2670XE[M]	2,300	71						67	15.5	11.3	4.2	70	36	33	25.6	ext.	•
48	Maytag MFF2258VE[W]	1,500	70						63	14.5	10.4	4.1	71	33	32	21.7		•
49	KitchenAid KFIV29PCMS	3,000	69						71	17.6	12.4	5.2	70	36	34	28.6	ext.	•
50	Electrolux Wave-Touch EW28BS85K[S]	3,200	69						80	18.1	11.9	6.2	69	36	34	27.8	ext.	•
51	Kenmore Elite 72123	2,000	69						55	13.3	9.3	4	68	30	33	19.6	ext.	•
52	Whirlpool Gold G16FARXX[Q]	1,900	69						68	15.5	11.3	4.2	70	36	33	25.6	ext.	•
53	Frigidaire Gallery FGHB2866PF	1,900	68						86	18.6	12.3	6.3	70	36	34	27.8	ext.	•
54	Samsung RF23HCEDBSR	3,100	68						81	16	11.1	4.9	69	36	29	22.5	ext.	•
55	Whirlpool WRF560SEY[M]	1,800	67						57	13.3	9.3	4	68	30	33	19.6	ext.	•
56	Whirlpool Gold GIOFSAXV[Y]	2,800	67						60	12.2	9.1	3.1	70	36	29	19.8	ext.	•
57	Electrolux EI27BS26J[W]	2,200	67						75	17.7	12.7	5	70	36	33	26.7	ext.	•
58	KitchenAid KFFS20EY[MS]	1,900	67						57	13.3	9.3	4	68	30	33	19.6	int.	•
59	Samsung RF197AC[WP]	1,250	67						69	13.4	9.5	3.9	70	32	28	17.8		•
60	KitchenAid KBFS22EW[WH]	1,600	67						64	14.6	10.4	4.2	70	33	32	21.7		•
61	Bosch B26FT70SN[S]	2,650	67						84	16.4	11.2	5.2	70	36	33	25.9	ext.	•
62	LG LFC28768ST	1,900	67						79	20.1	14.1	6	69	36	33	27.7		•
63	Viking VCFF236SS	3,600	66						63	14.1	10.5	3.6	72	36	29	21.8	int.	•
64	Frigidaire Gallery FGHN2866PF	2,100	66						85	19.5	13.8	5.7	69	36	31	27.8		•
65	KitchenAid KFI529BB[MS]	2,900	65						85	17.9	12.7	5.2	69	36	34	28.6	ext.	•
66	Whirlpool WRF989SDA[H]	2,400	65						82	18	12.7	5.3	69	36	34	28.6	ext.	•
67	Frigidaire Gallery FGHG2366PF	2,400	64						74	15.3	11.1	4.2	70	36	29	22.6		•
68	Maytag MFI2269VE[W]	1,900	64						73	12.8	9.4	3.4	71	33	32	21.8	ext.	•

Ratings

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results										Features			
					Temperature performance	Energy efficiency	Noise	Ease of use	Energy cost/yr. (\$)	Total usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Fridge usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Freezer usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Exterior height (in.)	Exterior width (in.)	Exterior depth (in.)	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Water dispenser	Stainless/SS-look option

C THREE-DOOR FRENCH-DOOR BOTTOM-FREEZERS continued

69	Whirlpool Gold GX2FHDVX[Q] Gold GX2SHDXVJ (Lowe's)	\$1,450	63						72	13.8	9.7	4.1	70	33	32	21.7		
70	GE GNE22GMEES	1,700	63						68	15.5	11.2	4.3	68	33	33	22.1	int.	
71	Electrolux EI27BS16J[W]	2,100	63						86	19.2	14.2	5	70	36	33	26.6		
72	GE Profile PNS20KSESS	2,100	62						67	12.6	9	3.6	67	30	33	19.5		
73	DCS RF195AUUX1 RF195ADUX1	3,000	61						59	12.5	9.1	3.4	69	36	28	19.5	ext.	
74	Kenmore 7130[3]	1,700	61						66	15.6	11	4.6	68	33	33	22.7		
75	Haier HB21FC45NS	1,900	59						70	14.6	10.1	4.5	70	36	28	20.6		
76	Kenmore Elite 72353	3,650	57						78	14.9	9.9	5	70	36	29	24.5	ext.	
77	Viking DDF136D[SS] Professional VCFF136D[]	3,700	57						65	11.7	8.7	3	69	36	28	19.8	ext.	
78	Frigidaire Gallery FGHF2366PF	1,900	52						83	13.9	9.7	4.2	70	36	29	22.6	ext.	
79	GE PFC31NFCSS	2,700	50						72	12.6	9	3.6	70	36	29	20.7		

D FOUR-DOOR FRENCH-DOOR BOTTOM-FREEZERS

✓ 1	Samsung Chef Collection RF34H9960S4	5,400	84						99	23.4	14	9.4	73	36	36	34.3	ext.	
✓ 2	Samsung T9000 RF32FMQDBSR	3,500	83						70	22.9	13.7	9.2	72	36	36	31.8	ext.	
✓ 3	Samsung RF25HMEDBSR	3,000	80						66	16.6	11.7	4.9	69	33	34	24.7	ext.	
✓ 4	Samsung RF31FMESBSR	3,500	79						69	19	13	6	69	36	36	30.5	ext.	
5	Samsung RF23HSEBSR	3,330	76						67	15.1	10.5	4.6	69	36	29	22.6	ext.	
6	Whirlpool WRX988SIBM	2,600	74						68	17.9	12.7	5.2	69	36	34	28.1	ext.	
7	Samsung RF30HBEDBSR	3,200	73						75	20.5	13.9	6.6	69	36	36	29.5	ext.	
8	KitchenAid KFXS25RY[MS]	2,500	71						60	16.2	12.1	4.1	70	36	33	25	ext.	
9	Samsung RF24FSEDBSR	3,000	66						67	14.3	10.2	4.1	69	36	28	23.6	ext.	
10	LG LMX28988[ST]	2,700	63						92	16.6	12.5	4.1	70	36	33	28	ext.	
11	Blomberg BRFD2650SS	2,700	58						85	17.7	11.4	6.3	73	36	34	23.3	ext.	
12	GE Profile PVS21KSESS	3,100	30						120	12.2	9.2	3	69	36	29	20.7	ext.	

E SIDE BY SIDES

✓ 1	Samsung RS25H5121SR	1,900	83						58	18.6	11.8	6.8	69	36	34	24.5	ext.	
✓ 2	Samsung RH29H8000SR	2,500	77						71	22.9	14.9	8	69	36	36	28.5	ext.	
3	LG LSC22991ST	2,700	76						53	15.6	11.1	4.5	69	36	30	21.6	ext.	
✓ 4	Samsung RS22HDHPNSR	2,400	76						76	19.5	14	5.5	69	36	28	22.3	ext.	
5	KitchenAid KSF26C6X[YY]	1,950	75						75	18.6	12.2	6.4	69	36	34	25.8	ext.	
✓ 6	Bosch Linea 800 B22CS80SN[S] B22CS50SN[]	2,700	74						75	14.5	9.5	5	69	36	28	21.7	ext.	
✓ 7	DCS RX215PJX1	2,500	73						62	15.7	10.1	5.6	70	36	28	21.5		
✓ 8	Samsung RH29H9000SR	2,350	72						73	21.2	13.4	7.8	69	36	36	28.5	ext.	
9	Frigidaire Gallery FGH52655PF Gallery FGH52631PF, Professional FPHS2699PF	1,350	71						63	17.4	11.8	5.6	70	36	34	26	ext.	
10	Whirlpool WRS950SIAM	1,900	71						98	22	13.6	8.4	70	36	34	29.8	ext.	
11	Electrolux EI26SS30J[S]	1,700	69						77	16.1	11.3	4.8	70	36	34	26	ext.	
12	Frigidaire Gallery FGH52355PF	1,500	68						59	15.4	10.4	5	69	33	34	22.6	ext.	
13	Samsung RS25H5000SR	1,400	68						74	18	11.8	6.2	69	36	34	24.5	ext.	
14	Samsung RSG309AA[RS] RSG307AA[]	2,200	68						94	22.4	14.3	8.1	70	36	35	29.6	ext.	
15	KitchenAid KSC24C8E[YY] KSO24C8E[]	2,500	68						80	16.2	10.1	6.1	71	36	28	23.9	ext.	
16	GE GSHF6LGBWW	1,130	67						84	16.5	11.2	5.3	70	36	32	25.9	ext.	
17	GE GSH25JSDSS	1,200	67						82	16.7	10.7	6	70	36	32	25.3	ext.	
18	Fagor FQ9925XUS	2,300	67						86	14.5	10.2	4.3	69	36	38	20	ext.	
19	Whirlpool WRL767SIAM	1,710	67						85	19.4	12.7	6.7	69	36	36	26.5	ext.	
20	Whirlpool WRS321CDBM	1,650	66						72	13.7	9.9	3.8	69	36	30	21.4	ext.	

☒ CR Best Buy
 ☒ Recommended
 ☒ Excellent
 ☒ Very good
 ☐ Good
 ☐ Fair
 ☐ Poor

		Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results										Features			
Recommended	Rank	Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Temperature performance	Energy efficiency	Noise	Ease of use	Energy cost/yr. (\$)	Total usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Fridge usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Freezer usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Exterior height (in.)	Exterior width (in.)	Exterior depth (in.)	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Water dispenser	Stainless/SS-look option
				0 P F G V E 100														

E SIDE BY SIDES continued

21	Kenmore	51133	\$1,600	66					83	19.2	12.5	6.7	69	36	34	26.5	ext.	•
22	Kenmore	Elite 51163	1,800	66					80	19.4	12.7	6.7	69	36	34	26.5	ext.	•
23	Kenmore	Elite 51173	2,000	66					101	22	13.6	8.4	69	36	34	29.8	ext.	•
24	GE	Café CZS25TSESS	3,400	65					75	14.7	10.5	4.2	72	36	28	26.4	ext.	•
25	Frigidaire	Gallery FGHC2331PF Professional FPHC2399PF	1,500	65					65	15.1	10.1	5	70	36	29	22.6	ext.	•
26	Samsung	RH22H8010SR	2,500	63					59	15.5	10.5	5	69	36	29	21.5	ext.	•
27	LG	LSC27925ST	1,300	62					83	16.6	11.3	5.3	69	36	33	26.5	ext.	•
28	Samsung	RH22H9010SR	2,350	60					61	15.3	10.3	5	69	36	28	21.5	ext.	•
29	Hotpoint	HS25GFB[WV]	900	59					74	16.8	11.1	5.7	69	36	33	25.3	ext.	•
30	Electrolux	EI26S55G[W]	1,800	58					90	16	10.9	5.1	70	36	33	26	ext.	•
31	GE	GSHF3KGZWW	1,350	58					76	15.3	11.4	3.9	69	33	32	23.1	ext.	•
32	KitchenAid	KSF22C4CYY	1,700	55					80	13.4	9.1	4.3	66	33	33	22	ext.	•
33	Kenmore	Elite 5137[3]	2,150	54					67	15.9	10.7	5.2	66	33	33	23.1	ext.	•
34	LG	LSC23924[SW]	1,300	53					70	14.9	10.5	4.4	67	33	32	22.9	ext.	•
35	Amana	ASD2575BRS	1,200	52					65	15.8	10.6	5.2	69	36	32	25.5	ext.	•
36	Whirlpool	WSF26C2EX[W]	1,050	51					99	17.4	12.4	5	69	36	33	26.4	ext.	•
37	Whirlpool	ED5KVEV[Q]	900	48					75	15.3	10.1	5.2	70	36	31	25.1	ext.	•
38	Kenmore	50023	1,200	48					60	15.7	10.6	5.1	69	36	33	25.4	ext.	•
39	GE	GSE26HMEES	1,600	46					93	16.5	11.2	5.3	69	36	33	25.9	ext.	•
40	Samsung	RS261MD[WP]	1,200	45					71	18.1	12	6.1	70	36	34	25.6	ext.	•
41	Frigidaire	FFSS2314QS	1,050	45					60	15	10.3	4.7	69	33	33	22.6	ext.	•
42	Kenmore	51123	1,100	43					67	15.5	10.3	5.2	69	36	33	25.4	ext.	•
43	Frigidaire	FFSS2614QS	1,000	43					102	18	12.2	5.8	69	36	32	26	ext.	•
44	GE	GSS20GEWWW	1,450	43					76	13.3	9.2	4.1	68	32	32	20	ext.	•
45	Kenmore	Elite 41163	1,900	42					85	17.3	11	6.3	69	36	29	24.5	ext.	•
46	GE	GSH22JSDSS	1,400	39					62	14.1	10	4.1	67	33	32	22.1	ext.	•
47	Whirlpool	WRS325FDAM	1,250	37					84	15.1	10	5.1	69	36	33	25.4	ext.	•
48	Samsung	RSG257AA[WP]	2,000	29					100	13.7	8.2	5.5	70	36	28	24.1	ext.	•

Select Ratings

Recommended products only from 28 tested models.

		Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results										Features						
Recommended	Rank				Temperature performance	Energy efficiency	Noise	Ease of use	Energy cost/yr. (\$)	Total usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Fridge usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Freezer usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Exterior height (in.)	Exterior width (in.)	Exterior depth (in.)	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Bottom-freezer	Side-by-side	French-door style	Water dispenser	Stainless/SS-look option
				0 P F G V E 100																	

F BUILT-INS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Thermador	Freedom Collection T36BB820SS	\$7,400	80				59	14.3	9.8	4.5	84	36	25	20	•			•
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Jenn-Air	J542PPDUB[SS]	7,200	80				73	17.3	12	5.3	84	42	26	25.3	•		ext.	•
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Bosch	Integra 800 Series B36BT830NS	7,500	78				64	13.8	9.2	4.6	84	36	25	20			•	•
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	Thermador	Freedom Collection T36BT810NS	8,000	78				64	13.8	9.2	4.6	84	36	25	20			•	•
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Thermador	KBUDT4265E[S]	8,750	77				78	16	10.6	5.4	84	42	26	25.2	•		ext.	•
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Sub-Zero	BI425[S]	8,000	76				79	18.3	12.3	6	84	42	26	24.1	•			•
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Miele	KF1901Vi	7,200	76				65	14	10.6	3.4	83	36	24	18.3	•			•



Love the beefy, industrial look? Not all pro-style ranges aced our tests. Check our Ratings so you don't get burned.

Great ranges

Gas or electric, sleek or pro-style, our Ratings reveal the products that deliver top performance and good looks, at every price point.

You don't necessarily have to spend more to get more: Our tests show that some of the best-performing models cost hundreds and even thousands less than certain pricey pretenders. One of our top picks is an electric smoothtop range that includes a convection mode for the oven priced at \$1,000. A pro-style range, on the other hand, can easily set you back \$5,000.

Gas and electric ranges can deliver good performance, and your kitchen is probably equipped for one fuel type or the other. Serious chefs often prefer gas models for the quick response and visual confirmation of a flame. But electric elements generally heat faster and maintain low heat more precisely.

Dual-fuel ranges combine a gas cooktop with an electric oven, but with no clear advantages. You'll also find electric ranges with induction surface elements, which use an electromagnetic field to heat a pot or pan directly while leaving the surface of the cooktop cooler to the touch. They require magnetic cookware, which is widely available.

Most ordinary electric and gas ranges are 30 inches wide, and the trendy pro-style gas models might span 36 inches or more. Even traditional ranges now have beefy knobs, rugged grates, and stainless-steel trim for far less money. If you want good cooking and the look of stainless-steel trim, you'll find both for less than \$1,000.



Tip **BUY INNER BEAUTY.**

Bold colors are tempting, but be sure that the range you choose pairs its good looks with top performance.

How to choose

Focus on convenience.

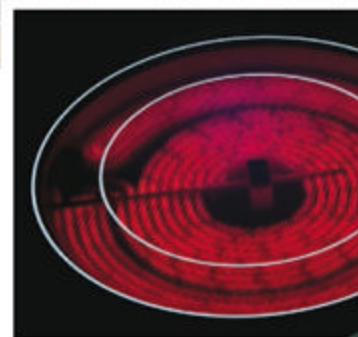
Look for at least one high-power burner or element for quick heating. Expandable electric elements let you match their size to a pot or pan. Ranges with at least five rack positions provide added flexibility when cooking on more than one rack, and models with double ovens can roast a turkey and bake a pie at the same time.

Match your cooking style.

Love sweets? Look for models with strong baking scores. If a juicy steak is a frequent menu item, choose a range that did well in our broiling tests. A roomy range helps if you entertain often; we measure space that you can actually use.



KitchenAid KDRS505XSS



Expandable element

Don't buy based on Btu/hr.

Short for British thermal units per hour, this rating for gas surface burners is often a selling point at a store. But that measure merely indicates the amount of gas used and heat generated, not performance. Indeed, higher Btu didn't always guarantee faster heating in our tests.



Warming drawer

Details that count

■ Electronic touchpads with digital display

Be sure they're well-placed and visible while you cook. Front-mounted touchpads can be easy to bump and reset by accident.

■ Elements or burners

Look for at least one high-heat element or burner (at least 2,100 watts or 12,500 Btu/hr.), especially if you often cook for a crowd. High heat sears and stir-fries well, and it can cook large quantities quickly. On gas ranges, sealed burners keep crumbs from dropping beneath the cooktop, and a simmer burner provides an extra-low setting for delicate sauces.

■ Raised edge around the perimeter of the cooktop

It contains spills inside the cooktop area and makes cleanup much easier.

■ Hot-surface light

On an electric range, this light warns when an element is still hot. It's particularly useful on conventional smoothtops.

■ Induction surface elements

On an electric range, induction uses a powerful magnetic field to heat pots and pans fast, and the cooktop stays cooler.

■ Double ovens

Two separate ovens let you roast a turkey in one oven while baking a pie in the other, for example.

■ Warming drawer

This convenient feature helps keep plates and food warm and comes in handy when you're cooking for a crowd.

■ Dual-fuel

These ranges feature a gas cooktop paired with an electric oven. Manufacturers tout more-even oven heating compared with gas ovens, especially for baking. But our tests have found no clear advantages.

■ Five or more oven-rack positions

The more, the better. You can adjust for the size of the food and its distance to the broiler, and have more flexibility when using multiple racks.



■ Control lockout

It lets you disable the oven controls. We recommend it if the electronic-oven control panel is at the front of the range.

■ Variable broiling

Most electric and gas ovens have this feature. It provides adjustable settings for food that needs slower or faster cooking.

■ Convection

Many higher-priced electric and gas ovens use a fan to circulate the hot air in an oven. Some have an additional convection heating element. Convection can reduce cooking time, especially for large items.

■ Self-cleaning cycle

Most use high heat to burn off spills and splatters in the oven. An automatic safety lock prevents the door from being opened until the oven has cooled. Certain models have a digital countdown display that shows the time left in the cycle.

■ Flexible surfaces

Continuous grates on gas ranges let you slide, instead of lift, heavy cookware between burners. Most smoothtops have expandable (dual or triple) elements that allow you to switch between a large, high-power element and a small, low-power element contained within it.

Product guide

Stand-alone ranges are best when you're simply replacing an older model or when the range is the focal point, as with professional-style models.

ELECTRIC RANGES

Smoothtops, which place the cooktop elements beneath a ceramic surface, have displaced coil cooktop ranges for all but the lowest-priced models. Most have four surface elements in three sizes. Some have a warming element in the center section. Induction cooktop elements use magnetic coils below the ceramic-glass surface to generate heat directly in a pot or pan rather than the cooking surface.

Pros Coil ranges are less expensive than conventional smoothtops, which are sleeker and easier to wipe clean. Induction technology takes the cake for quick cooktop heating.

Cons Coil models won't win any styling awards. Induction elements add to the price of a cooktop and require you to use magnetic cookware. Smoothtop element performance can be affected by pot flatness and construction, as well.



Induction surfaces such as the one above heat pans while the cooktop stays cool.



Kenmore 94203



GE PGS920SEFSS

GAS RANGES

The power of a burner is measured in British thermal units per hour (Btu/hr.). Most gas ranges have four surface burners in three sizes: one or two medium-power burners (about 9,000 Btu/hr.), a small burner (about 5,000), and one or two large ones (about 12,500 or more). Some have a fifth burner instead of a center section. Gas-on-glass models with gas burners above a smooth ceramic surface are also an option.

Pros An experienced chef might find it easier to judge heat by the appearance of a gas flame, and gas burners can accommodate a variety of pot types and sizes. Smoothtop and coil elements tend to retain heat longer than gas burners when you move from a high setting to a low setting.

Cons In general, electric ranges offer faster high cooktop heating, though performance is model-specific.

Repair or replace?

The survey examined products through the first eight years of ownership.

GAS

1-3 yr.
REPAIR

4-5 yr.
**CONSIDER
REPAIR**

6+ yr.
REPLACE

Median repair cost \$187

TIP Dual-fuel models are pricey, so they're often worth fixing.

ELECTRIC

1-2 yr.
REPAIR

3-4 yr.
**CONSIDER
REPAIR**

5+ yr.
REPLACE

Median repair cost \$190

TIP Parts for electric ranges tend to cost less than those for gas models.



Samsung

RECOMMENDED MODELS

Electric ranges

You can find a high-performing electric range without spending a bundle. Several models we tested costing \$600 to \$1,000 out-performed ranges costing \$1,600 or more. Many moderately priced models also offer stainless steel, high-power elements, and other features. Spending more than \$1,000 generally buys an additional oven or a warming drawer. More money also gets you a more stylish design and possibly heavier construction. But that doesn't always translate into better cooking or better performance.



A1 LG LDE3037ST

Type Smoothtop, double oven (30-inch)
Price \$1,300

This range was superb at simmering, delivering fast cooktop heat, baking, broiling, and self-cleaning. It offers four surface cooking elements, including two high-power, and a warming element to keep a side dish warm while you finish the main dish. The oven has convection and steam-clean function for light cleaning.

lg.com



A2 Samsung NE58F9710WS

Type Smoothtop, double oven (30-inch)
Price \$1,500

This slide-in model has one oven cavity and a single door, but comes with a divider that splits the oven in two, but the foods must cook within a certain temperature range. Cooktop heat was fast. Simmering, broiling, and self-cleaning were superb, and baking was impressive.

samsung.com



A3 Maytag MET8885XS

Type Smoothtop, double oven (30-inch)

Price \$1,700

This range features a smaller oven on top and a larger oven below, which has a convection feature. It was superb at baking but mediocre at broiling and self-cleaning. There are four surface elements, including two high-powered. For simmering sauces and melting chocolate, this model was excellent.

maytag.com



B1 LG LRE3083SW

Type Smoothtop, single oven (30-inch)

Price \$800

This top-rated model was superb at simmering and delivered fast heat. Baking and self-cleaning were impressive; broiling was superb. The oven has convection and a steam-clean feature for light cleaning. There are four rangetop cooking elements, including two high-powered.

lg.com



B2 LG LRE3023S

Type Smoothtop, single oven (30-inch)

Price \$1,000

This model offers super simmering for heating sauces and melting chocolate, and has two high-power cooktop elements for searing and quickly bringing large pots of water to a boil. A warming element will keep a side dish warm while you finish the main dish. The spacious oven was impressive at baking and aced our broiling tests and has a convection mode.

lg.com



B3 GE Café CS980STSS

Type Smoothtop, single oven (30-inch)

Price \$2,800

High performance and bold style make this model stand out. It was excellent at simmering, baking, and broiling, and impressive at fast cooktop heating. It has five surface elements, including one high-powered, and a large oven equipped with convection. Touchpads set the oven temperature, and the warming drawer below is handy when cooking for a crowd.

geappliances.com



B5 GE PS920SFSS

Type Smoothtop, single oven (30-inch)

Price \$2,500

This slide-in model offers has four elements, including one high-power, and was superb at simmering and delivered fast heat. The large oven has a convection option and was impressive at baking and broiling, and excellent at self-cleaning. The warming drawer is handy when cooking for a crowd or waiting for stragglers.

geappliances.com



C1 Kenmore 94142

 **CR Best Buy**

Type Coil, single oven (30-inch)

Price \$430

This model is a basic range that delivered excellent performance. It has four surface elements; two are high-power. Simmering was superb. The large-capacity oven was impressive at baking but mediocre at broiling. This model excelled in our self-cleaning tests.

kenmore.com



“I’d choose an induction smoothtop range. Induction cooking surfaces perform really well in our tests and have other advantages, such as the surface not getting as hot when you use it and fast response when you adjust the heat. The Kenmore 95073, though still a bit of a splurge, is one of the least expensive ranges we’ve tested featuring an induction surface.”

—Tara Casaregola,
Test Program Leader

D2 Kenmore 95073

Type Induction, single oven (30-inch)

Price \$1,530
kenmore.com



D1 Samsung FTQ307NWGX

Type Induction, single oven (30-inch)
Price \$2,000

This model excelled in simmering, baking, and broiling, and includes a generous oven with convection. Yet it’s one of the less expensive induction models. And it’s available in stainless. It has four surface cooking elements (two are high-power), a warming drawer, touchpads for setting oven temperature, and touch controls for cooktop settings. The oven has a “steam clean” function for light cleaning.

samsung.com

Most & least reliable brands

More than
46,570 readers
sound off

ELECTRIC RANGES

Whirlpool	7%
GE	7%
Frigidaire	9%
Samsung	10%
Kenmore	11%
Maytag	11%
LG	12%
KitchenAid	15%
Electrolux	16%
Jenn-Air	17%

GAS AND DUEL-FUEL RANGES

GAS	
Kenmore	9%
Frigidaire	9%
GE	9%
Whirlpool	11%
LG	11%
KitchenAid	15%
Maytag	15%
DUAL-FUEL	
GE	12%

Source: Consumer Reports Annual Product Reliability Survey. Our findings are based on 46,570 electric and gas ranges that readers bought new between 2010 and 2014. Differences of fewer than 4 points aren’t meaningful. Models within a brand may vary, and design and manufacture changes may affect future reliability.

Gas ranges

You can find a capable gas range without paying top dollar. Spending more than \$1,000 buys extra features such as an electric oven, an additional oven or warming drawer, a convection mode, and a fifth burner, plus more stylish design and heavier construction.



E1 KitchenAid KDRS505XSS

Type Dual-fuel, double oven (30-inch)
Price \$2,000

The only 30-inch dual-fuel range to make our list of standouts, this model pairs a gas cooktop with an electric oven. It offers excellent simmering and lots of oven space, along with a convection mode. Baking was also impressive. Available in stainless steel.

kitchenaid.com



E2 GE PGB950SEFSS

Type Gas, double oven (30-inch)
Price \$2,500

A smaller top oven is paired with a larger bottom oven offering a generous capacity. This model was impressive at simmering and baking, mediocre at broiling, and self-cleaning was only fair. It has five burners, including one high power, a bridge burner that's handy when using the griddle, and a convection option in the lower oven.

geappliances.com



F1 Samsung NX58F5700WS

Type Gas, single oven (30-inch)
Price \$1,700

This range offers impressive simmering and baking, and very good broiling and self-cleaning. It has five surface burners, a bridge for griddle use, a warming drawer, and very good oven capacity, and five rack positions. Comes with wok ring and griddle plate.

samsung.com



F2 Samsung NX58H9500WS

Type Gas, single oven (30-inch)
Price \$2,500

This slide-in model has five surface burners, including two high-power, convection, warming drawer, bridge burner for griddles, and a temperature probe. Superb simmering and a large oven offers impressive baking and broiling. Unlike many gas models, it was very good in our tough oven self-cleaning tests.

samsung.com



G1 KitchenAid KDRS407VSS

Type Pro-style, dual-fuel (30-inch)
Price \$4,000

This model (a 36-inch is also available) pairs a gas cooktop with an electric oven, delivering impressive performance overall. Superb simmering and fast cooktop heating helped put it on top; self-cleaning was very good. Time-savers include a convection mode and three high-power burners. But despite its hefty price, the oven is small and broiling was average.

kitchenaid.com

Ratings

All tested products in performance order, within types.

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results						Features						
					Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	High-power elements/burners	Medium-power elements/burners	Low-power elements/burners	Convection mode	Cooking drawer	Slide-in	Stainless steel available

A ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP, DOUBLE OVEN (30-INCH)

✓	1	LG LDE3037ST	\$1,300	89	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
✓	2	Samsung NE58F9710WS	1,500	85	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	2	1	●		●
✓	3	Maytag MET8885XS	1,700	83	●	●	●	○	●	○	2	0	2	●		●
✓	4	Frigidaire FGFE302TNF	1,400	82	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2			●
✓	5	Frigidaire FGFE308TNF	1,800	81	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	2	1	●		●
✓	6	LG LDE3015ST	1,300	81	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2			●
	7	KitchenAid Architect Series II KERS507XSS	1,600	77	●	●	●	○	●	○	2	0	2	●		●
	8	Kenmore 98053	1,600	76	●	●	●	○	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
	9	Frigidaire FGFE301DNW	1,300	75	●	●	●	○	●	●	2	0	2			●
	10	Samsung FE710DRS	1,000	73	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
	11	Whirlpool GGE388LXQ	1,100	71	●	●	○	●	●	○	2	0	2			●
	12	LG LDE3017ST	1,300	69	●	●	○	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
	13	Frigidaire FGFE304DKW	1,500	67	●	●	○	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
	14	GE JB870TFWW	1,500	60	●	○	○	●	●	●	1	2	1	●		●
	15	Frigidaire FGFE306TM	1,300	57	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
	16	LG LDE3035ST	1,400	49	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2			●

B ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP, SINGLE OVEN (30-INCH)

✓	1	LG LRE3083SW	800	86	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
✓	2	LG LRE3023S	1,000	86	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
✓	3	GE Café CS980STSS	2,800	86	●	●	●	●	●	○	1	2	2	●	●	●
	4	Electrolux EI30EF35JS	1,600	85	●	●	●	○	●	●	2	1	1	●		●
✓	5	GE PS920SFSS	2,500	83	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	2	1	●	●	●
	6	Samsung FE-R300SB	600	80	●	●	●	○	●	○	2	0	2			●
	7	Frigidaire FFEE3018LW FFEE3020LW	600	79	●	●	●	○	●	●	2	0	2			●
	8	Bosch HEI8054U	1,800	79	●	●	●	○	○	○	2	0	2	●	●	●
	9	Kenmore 94242	900	78	●	●	○	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
	10	LG LRE30453SB	730	78	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
	11	Samsung NE594ROABSR	600	77	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●
	12	LG LRE30955ST	1,600	76	○	●	●	●	●	●	1	2	1	●		●
	13	Frigidaire Professional FPEF3081MF	900	76	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	2	1	●		●
	14	Samsung NE597ROABSR	1,200	75	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●

What the symbols mean ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

✓ **CR Best Buy** These models offer the best combination of performance and price.

All are recommended.

✓ **Recommended** These are high-performing models that stand out.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score reflects cooktop performance, oven capacity and cleaning, baking, and broiling. Displayed scores are rounded; models are listed in order of precise overall score. **Cooktop high** is how quickly the highest-powered element or burner heated water to a near-boil.

Cooktop low is how well the lowest-powered element or burner provided low heat as for melting chocolate without scorching, and how well the highest element or burner, set on low, held tomato sauce below a boil. **Baking** reflects even browning of cakes and cookies on two oven racks.

Broiling is even browning of a pan of burgers as well as searing ability. **Oven capacity** is our evaluation of usable space. Oven cleaning is the ability to remove our baked-on mix of eggs, cheese, pie filling, and other ingredients on the self-cleaning setting. **Price** is approximate retail.

	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results						Features						
Recommended	Rank	Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.		Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	High-power elements/burners	Medium-power elements/burners	Low-power elements/burners	Convection mode	Cooking drawer	Slide-in	Stainless steel available
			0 100 P F G V G E													

B ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOP, SINGLE OVEN (30-INCH) continued

15	GE JB750DFWW	\$1,000	75	●	●	●	○	●	●	1	2	1	●		●	
16	Frigidaire Gallery FGEF3032MF	675	74	●	●	○	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●	
17	KitchenAid Architect Series KERS807SSS	2,000	71	●	●	●	○	○	●	2	2	0	●		●	
18	Jenn-Air JER888SRAS	1,600	70	●	●	○	○	●	●	2	0	2	●		●	
19	GE JB650SFSS	800	70	●	●	○	●	●	●	2	0	2			●	
20	Samsung FTQ353IWUX	800	70	●	○	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●	
21	Frigidaire FGEF3055MW	800	69	●	●	○	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●	
22	Whirlpool Gold GY399LXUQ	1,500	68	●	●	○	●	○	●	2	0	2	●		●	
23	Samsung FTQ387LWGX	1,000	67	●	○	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●	
24	Frigidaire Gallery FGE3065PW	1,600	66	●	●	○	●	○	○	2	0	2	●		●	
25	Whirlpool WFE720HOAS	1,100	66	●	●	●	○	●	●	2	0	2	●		●	
26	Frigidaire FFE3025PW	1,200	66	●	●	●	●	○	●	2	0	2			●	
27	KitchenAid KERS206XWH	850	65	●	○	○	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●	
28	Whirlpool WFE510SOAW	600	64	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2			●	
29	Amana AER5830VAB AER5844VAW	550	56	●	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2			●	
30	Kenmore 91312 93012	500	56	●	○	○	●	○	NA	1	1	2			●	
31	Maytag MER888OAS	1,100	54	●	○	●	○	●	●	1	2	1	●		●	
32	Amana AER5823XAW	450	52	○	●	●	●	●	NA	0	2	2			●	
33	Frigidaire FFEF3013LS	500	48	●	●	●	○	○	NA	2	0	2			●	

C ELECTRIC COIL TOP, SINGLE OVEN (30-INCH)

✓	1	Kenmore 94142	430	81	●	●	●	○	●	2	0	2			●	
	2	Frigidaire FFEF3015LW	450	78	●	●	●	○	●	2	0	2			●	
	3	Hotpoint RB757DPWH	400	76	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2			●	
	4	Whirlpool RY160LXTQ	800	75	●	●	●	○	●	2	0	2			●	
	5	Whirlpool RF263LXTQ	400	65	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2			●	
	6	Whirlpool WFC310SOAW	500	63	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2			●	
	7	GE JB350RFSS	700	62	●	○	○	●	●	2	0	2			●	
	8	Whirlpool WFC340SOAW	700	44	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2			●	

D ELECTRIC INDUCTION SMOOTHTOP (30-INCH)

✓	1	Samsung FTQ307NWGX	1,200	89	●	●	●	●	●	2	2	0	●		●	
✓	2	Kenmore 95073	1,530	89	●	●	●	●	●	2	1	1	●		●	
✓	3	Samsung NE58H9970WS	3,600	86	●	●	●	●	●	3	1	0	●		●	
✓	4	GE PHB920SFSS	2,200	86	●	●	●	○	●	3	1	0	●		●	
✓	5	Bosch HIIP054U	3,200	81	●	●	●	○	○	2	2	0	●		●	
✓	6	Frigidaire Gallery FGIF3061NF	1,800	81	●	●	●	○	●	2	1	1	●		●	
	7	Electrolux EI30IF40LS	1,700	79	●	●	●	●	●	3	0	1	●		●	
	8	Samsung NE595N0PBSR	1,700	77	●	●	●	●	●	2	0	2	●		●	
	9	Electrolux EW30IS65JS	3,200	73	●	●	○	●	○	3	1	0	●	●	●	
	10	Maytag MIR889OAS	1,800	67	●	●	●	○	●	2	0	2	●		●	

E GAS AND DUAL-FUEL, DOUBLE OVEN (30-INCH)

✓	1	KitchenAid KDR505XSS Dual-fuel	2,000	71	○	●	●	●	○	1	2	2	●		●	
✓	2	GE PGB950SEFSS	2,500	70	●	●	●	○	●	1	3	1	●		●	
	3	Kenmore 78013	1,650	58	●	○	●	●	●	2	1	1			●	

Ratings

All tested products in performance order, within types.

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results						Features						
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	High-power elements/burners	Medium-power elements/burners	Low-power elements/burners	Convection mode	Cooking drawer	Slide-in	Stainless steel available
				0 100 P F G V E													

E GAS AND DUAL-FUEL, DOUBLE OVEN (30-INCH) continued

4	Jenn-Air JGR8890ADP	\$1,850	58								2	2	0				
5	LG LDG3035ST	1,600	57								2	2	1				
6	LG LDG3015ST	1,500	57								2	2	1				
7	GE Café CGS990SETSS	2,900	57								2	2	1				
8	Whirlpool GGG388LXQ	1,100	57								1	2	1				
9	Kenmore 78902	1,900	52								2	2	1				
10	Frigidaire FGGF304DLF FGGF301DNF	1,600	51								2	2	1				
11	Maytag MGT8885XS	1,500	43								1	2	2				

F GAS AND DUAL-FUEL, SINGLE OVEN (30-INCH)

✓ 1	Samsung NX58F5700WS	1,700	79								2	2	1				
✓ 2	Samsung NX58H9500WS	2,500	77								2	2	1				
✓ 3	GE PGS920SEFSS	2,800	73								1	3	1				
✓ 4	Frigidaire Gallery FGGF3032MW	775	71								2	2	1				
✓ 5	Samsung NX58F5500SS	1,000	71								2	2	1				
✓ 6	LG LRG3091SW	1,000	71								2	2	1				
✓ 7	Kenmore 74132	700	70								2	2	1				
8	Maytag MGR8772WW	1,000	68								2	3	0				
9	GE PGB945SEFSS	2,300	68								1	2	1				
10	Kenmore 74332	800	68								2	2	1				
11	Kenmore 75232	1,200	68								2	2	1				
12	Frigidaire Gallery FGGF3031KW	700	68								2	2	1				
13	Maytag MGR7665WB	700	66								2	1	1				
14	GE JGB750SEFSS	1,200	66								1	2	1				
15	Whirlpool Gold GW399LXUQ	1,400	66								2	1	1				
16	Frigidaire FGF368GS	500	65								1	2	1				
17	Electrolux EI30GF35JS	1,500	65								2	2	1				
18	Samsung FX710BGS FX510BGS	1,500	65								2	2	1				
19	Frigidaire FGF382HS	700	64								1	2	1				
20	GE Café CGS980SEMSS	2,700	63								2	1	2				
21	Bosch HDI8054U Dual-fuel	2,300	63								2	1	2				
22	Kenmore 72402	600	63								1	2	1				
23	Maytag MGR7661WW	500	63								1	2	1				
24	GE Café C2S980SEMSS Dual-fuel	2,800	62								2	1	2				
25	Samsung NX583GOVBSR	900	62								2	2	1				
26	GE Café CGS985SETSS	2,700	61								2	2	1				
27	Jenn-Air JDS8860BDP Dual-fuel	2,400	61								2	1	1				
28	Frigidaire Gallery FGGF3054KW	850	60								2	2	1				
29	Amana AGR6011VDS	900	60								1	2	1				
30	Electrolux EW30GS65GW	2,200	59								2	1	1				
31	Kenmore 72703	850	59								2	2	1				
32	KitchenAid KGRS206XWH	850	59								2	2	1				
33	Bosch HDIP054U Dual-fuel	2,800	57								2	1	2				
34	Whirlpool WFG510SOAS	600	56								1	2	1				
35	Kenmore 72313	1,100	55								2	2	1				
36	Whirlpool WFG520SOAS	600	54								2	1	1				

☒ CR Best Buy
 ☒ Recommended
 ● Excellent
 ● Very good
 ○ Good
 ○ Fair
 ● Poor

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results						Features						
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Cooktop high	Cooktop low	Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	High-power elements/burners	Medium-power elements/burners	Low-power elements/burners	Convection mode	Cooking drawer	Slide-in	Stainless steel available
				0100													
				P F G V G E													

F GAS AND DUAL-FUEL, SINGLE OVEN (30-INCH) continued

37	Kenmore	72903	\$1,000	54	●	○	●	●	○	●	2	2	1	●			●
38	Frigidaire	FFGF3023LS	700	53	○	●	●	●	●	●	1	2	1				●
39	Kenmore	72503	700	53	○	○	●	●	●	●	1	2	1				●
40	Frigidaire	Professional FPG3081KF	1,000	52	○	○	●	●	●	●	2	2	1	●			●
41	GE	Café C25985SETSS Dual-fuel	2,700	51	●	●	●	○	●	●	2	2	1	●	●		●
42	Whirlpool	WFG540HOAH	900	51	○	○	●	●	●	●	2	2	1	●			●
43	Hotpoint	RGB790DERWW	500	51	○	●	○	●	●	●	1	2	1				●
44	Whirlpool	WFG361LVQ	450	51	○	●	●	●	●	○	1	2	1				●
45	Maytag	MGR8880AS	1,100	50	○	○	●	●	●	●	2	2	1	●			●
46	Maytag	MGR8674AS	850	49	○	○	●	●	●	●	2	2	1				●
47	Kenmore	70602	600	48	●	●	●	●	○	NA	1	3	1				●
48	Frigidaire	FFGF3017LW	550	46	○	●	○	●	○	NA	1	2	1				●
49	Frigidaire	FFGS3025PW	1,100	44	○	○	●	●	○	○	1	2	1			●	●
50	Frigidaire	Gallery FGG53065PW	1,500	43	●	○	○	●	○	●	2	1	1	●		●	●
51	Kenmore	70502	500	42	○	●	●	●	○	NA	1	3	0				●
52	KitchenAid	Architect Series KGRS8075SS	1,700	31	○	●	●	●	○	○	2	0	2	●			●

G PRO-STYLE GAS AND DUAL-FUEL (30-INCH)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	KitchenAid	KDRS407VSS Dual-fuel KDRU707VSS	4,000	72	●	●	●	○	○	●	3	0	1	●		●
	2	Wolf	DF304 Dual-fuel	6,400	68	○	●	●	●	○	●	3	1	0	●		●
	3	Dacor	DR30G	3,100	66	○	●	○	○	●	NA	3	1	0	●		●
	4	GE	Monogram ZGP304NRSS	5,000	65	○	●	●	○	●	○	1	3	0	●		●
	5	Kenmore	Pro 79523 Dual-fuel	3,800	65	●	●	●	●	●	●	1	2	1	●		●
	6	Jenn-Air	JGRP430WP	4,000	62	○	●	●	●	○	●	3	0	1	●		●
	7	DCS	RGU-305	3,700	62	○	●	○	●	○	NA	5	0	0	●		●
	8	NXR	DRGB3001	2,000	60	○	●	○	○	○	NA	4	0	0	●		●
	9	DCS	RGTC305SS	4,700	58	●	●	●	●	●	●	5	0	0	●	●	●
	10	Dacor	Epicure ER30GSGH	3,600	58	○	●	○	○	○	NA	3	1	0	●		●
	11	Viking	VDSC305SS Dual-fuel	5,500	52	○	●	○	●	○	○	4	0	0	●	●	●
	12	Thermador	PRG304GH	4,500	52	●	●	●	●	○	NA	4	0	0	●		●
	13	Dacor	Epicure ER30D Dual-fuel	5,300	51	○	●	○	○	○	●	3	1	0	●	●	●
	14	Viking	VGSC5304BSS	5,000	46	●	●	●	●	●	●	4	0	0	●		●
	15	Wolf	GR304	4,900	45	○	●	●	●	○	NA	3	1	0	●		●
	16	Bertazzoni	PRO304GASX	3,100	43	○	●	○	○	●	NA	1	1	2	●		●
	17	American Range	ARR304	3,600	32	●	●	○	●	●	NA	3	1	0	●		●
	18	Blue Star	RNB304BV1SS	3,700	31	●	●	●	●	●	NA	3	1	0	●		●

H PRO-STYLE GAS AND DUAL-FUEL (36-INCH)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	KitchenAid	KDRU763VSS Dual-fuel KDRU767VSS, KDRS467VSS, KDRS463VSS, KDRS462VSS	6,000	74	○	●	●	●	●	●	3	0	1	●		●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	GE	Monogram ZDP364NDPSS Dual-fuel	7,500	72	○	●	●	○	●	●	4	0	0	●		●
	3	Thermador	PRG366JG PRG364JDG	7,500	68	●	●	●	○	●	●	6	0	0	●		●
	4	Viking	VGSC536-4G	7,200	68	●	●	●	●	○	●	4	0	0	●		●
	5	Wolf	GR366	6,000	59	○	●	○	●	●	NA	5	1	0	●		●
	6	NXR	DRGB3602	3,000	56	○	●	○	○	○	NA	6	0	0	●		●
	7	Kenmore	Pro 79623 Dual-fuel	5,500	52	●	○	○	○	●	●	2	4	0	●		●
	8	Jenn-Air	JGRP436WP	5,200	43	○	●	●	●	●	●	5	0	1	●		●
	9	Verona	VEFSGE365SS Dual-fuel	2,500	25	●	●	●	●	○	NA	3	0	2	●		●



Five-burner models like this one from Thermador are ideal for serving a crowd.

Cooktop picks

The design flexibility of a cooktop may fit your layout and cooking style better than a traditional range.

Rearranging the layout of your kitchen?

Now is the time to consider the benefits of a cooktop and wall oven combination. A cooktop can go wherever counter space allows, including on an island or a peninsula. That lets you face out into the kitchen rather than toward a wall, making it easier to interact with guests and family members. You can also opt to install an oven (or two) at waist or eye level.

Most cooktops are gas or conventional smoothtop electric. But induction technology is growing in popularity as prices fall. The downside of a cooktop and wall oven combo is price. Although you can pay as little as \$1,500 or so, you can often find a great range for roughly half that price. And we've found that with cooktops, pricier doesn't always mean better. See our Ratings to find a cooktop model that matches the best performance with the best price.



Viking

Open cooking surface

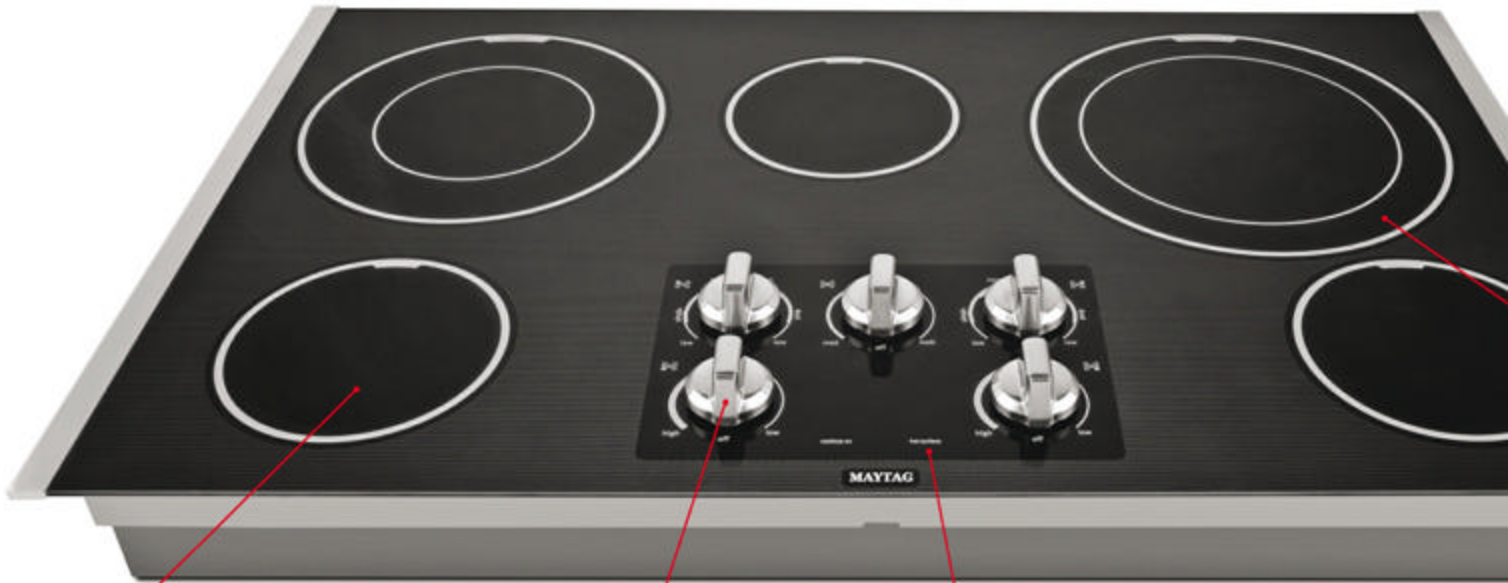
Thermador's Freedom CIT36XKB induction cooktop has no set elements, just a smooth surface and color touch screen so that you can cook anywhere on its surface. At 36 inches and \$5,000, it's the widest and most expensive induction cooktop we've tested.

How did it stack up? The cooktop was excellent overall, offering fast heating and superb simmering performance. We recommend it.



Details that count

ELECTRIC COOKTOPS



■ Smoothtops vs. coils

All but the least expensive electric cooktop models are smoothtops, which look sleeker than units with coils. They're easier to clean overall and they offer more features. But individual coils are easy to replace if they break. Most models are 30 inches wide, though 36-inch smoothtop models are available.

■ Controls

On many electric cooktops, the controls take up space on the surface. Models with touch-sensitive controls provide a flat, easy-to-clean surface, but they can be finicky.

■ Hot-surface warning indicator lights

Many smoothtops have at least one. Ideally, each element should have a separate warning light. It's an important safety feature; the cooking surface can remain hot long after an element has been turned off.

INDUCTION COOKTOPS

A growing number of electric cooktops use an electromagnetic field that mostly heats the pot or pan. Called induction cooking, the process speeds heating, wastes less energy than some other types, and cleaning up spills quickly is easier as the surface stays cooler during cooking and after. Though induction cooktops are still relatively expensive overall, falling prices now put them roughly on a par with certain upscale gas and conventional smoothtop electric models. Induction cooktops are usually 30 inches wide.

GAS COOKTOPS

Many gas cooktops are 36 inches wide and have five burners: a small unit (about 5,000 Btu/hr.); one or two medium-power units (about 9,000 Btu/hr.); and one or two large ones (12,000 Btu/hr. or more). Whichever type you buy, look for at least one high-power burner. Sealed burners catch crumbs and spills. Gas-on-glass burners are set into a smooth ceramic surface for a sleek profile much like a smoothtop electric's, though they still protrude slightly above the surface.

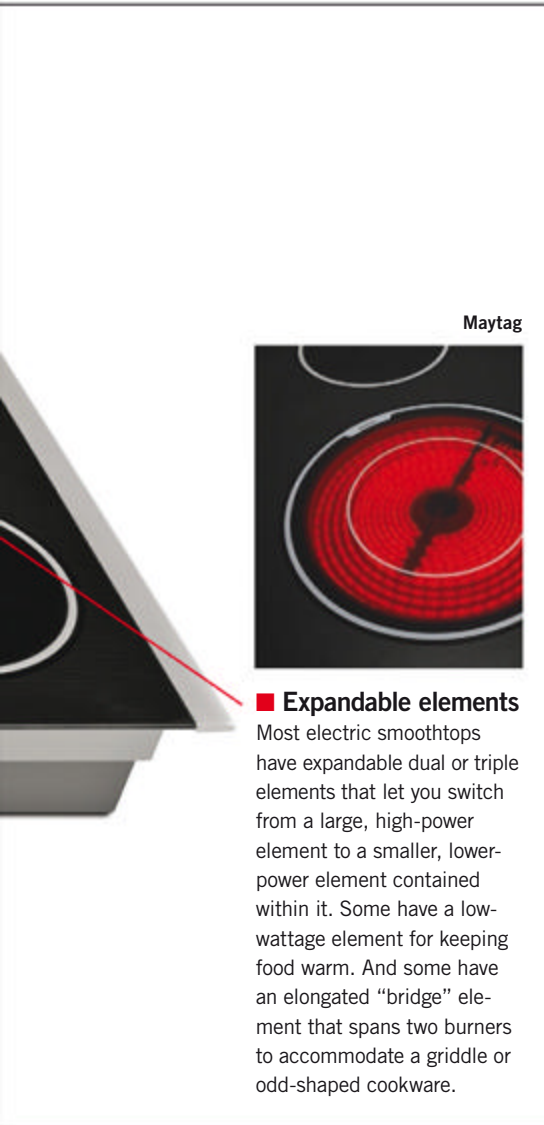


Maytag

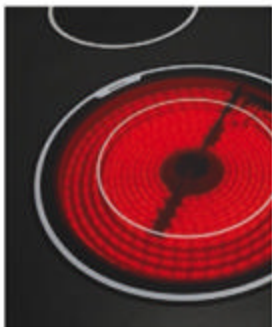
Make it last

Keep your cooktop simmering along with these tips on upkeep:

- Place heavy pots and pans gently on smoothtop models to avoid breakage.
- Prevent scratches by cleaning with a nonabrasive cleanser made for cooktops.
- On a coil model, never cover drip pans and bowls with aluminum foil, which can short-circuit the burner.
- Keep reflector bowls (beneath the burners) shiny and clean, to ensure they reflect heat up to the pan or pot efficiently. Replace if they can no longer be cleaned.
- Periodically clean burner ports with a needle or a small piece of wire.
- Don't poke the igniter or spray it with oven cleaner.



Maytag



■ Expandable elements

Most electric smoothtops have expandable dual or triple elements that let you switch from a large, high-power element to a smaller, lower-power element contained within it. Some have a low-wattage element for keeping food warm. And some have an elongated “bridge” element that spans two burners to accommodate a griddle or odd-shaped cookware.



How to choose

Choose your fuel—if you can.

Electric cooktop elements tend to heat faster than gas burners, but they lack the visual confirmation of a flame when adjusted from a high to a low setting. Induction electric cooktops offer even faster heating and quick response, but they cost more and require magnetic cookware. All three types are capable of delivering top cooking performance.

Weigh convenience as well as maintenance and durability.

Electric smoothtop cooktops are relatively easy to clean but require a special cooktop cleaner (available at most grocery stores) and can be damaged by dropped pots and spilled foods. Coil-top models tend to be less easily damaged but are also less stylish and more difficult to keep clean.



Induction technology requires magnetic cookware. Enameled steel, cast iron, and stainless steel designed for induction will work.

Don't pay for features that don't deliver value.

Touch-sensitive controls on smoothtops are sleek, but some are more finicky and less intuitive than conventional knobs. Manufacturers tout burners' high Btu/hr., but we've found that they don't always deliver faster heating.

Buy by cooking style.

If you often cook for a crowd, look for at least one high-power cooktop element or burner to heat large pots and pans more quickly.



RECOMMENDED MODELS

Electric cooktops Our top picks scored excellent overall.



A1 KitchenAid KECC604BBL

Type 30-inch smoothtop

Price \$900

Fast heating and precise simmering put this model ahead of the pack. It has four elements; two are high-power, and one is expandable to accommodate larger pots and pans. High- and low-heat performance were excellent.

kitchenaid.com



A3 Maytag MEC7430WS

Type 30-inch smoothtop

Price \$800

This cooktop is one of the few we tested that is superb at high- and low-heat cooking. It has four elements, including two high-power. On low heat, chocolate melted without scorching and tomato sauce held just below a boil. The knobs are mounted in the center.

maytag.com



A4 Kenmore 44273

Type 30-inch smoothtop

Price \$1,150

Fast heating and precise simmering put this model ahead of the others in this group. Other perks for the price include two high-power elements, a sleek touch-control keypad, expandable elements, and stainless-steel trim.

kenmore.com



A5 Kenmore 42733

✓ CR Best Buy

Type 30-inch smoothtop

Price \$640

This cooktop does almost as well as its brandmate for about half the price. You get similar fast heating and superb simmering, plus two high-power elements, including one that is expandable.

kenmore.com



A6 Frigidaire Professional FPEC3085KS

Type 30-inch smoothtop

Price \$950

This model offers precise simmering and heating. It has four elements (one is high-power), expandable elements, and a stainless-steel trim.

frigidaire.com



A7 GE Café CP350STSS

Type 30-inch smoothtop

Price \$1,200

Superb simmering and brisk heating make this cooktop a standout. It has five elements (one is high-power), expandable elements, and a stainless-steel trim.

geappliances.com

RECOMMENDED MODELS

Induction Models Our top picks scored excellent overall.



C1 Kenmore 43820

Type 30-inch induction

Price \$1,700

This model has one high-power element and a bridge element. Simmering is superb and heating speed is brisk. Touch controls and a stainless-steel trim add to its sleek look.

kenmore.com



C2 GE Profile PHP900DMBB

Type 30-inch induction

Price \$1,400

In addition to fast heating, this cooktop offers excellent simmering. It has touch controls and four elements; two are high-power.

geappliances.com



C3 Bosch NIT5066UC

Type 30-inch induction

Price \$1,800

This cooktop has four elements (two are high-power) and offers superb high- and low-heat performance. Elements can be set to turn off with a countdown timer.

boschappliances.com

RECOMMENDED MODELS

Gas cooktops Our top picks scored Very Good overall.



"I'd pick the 36-inch Thermador SGSX365FS gas cooktop, \$1,900. Paired with one of our top-rated wall ovens, it still costs significantly less than a 36-inch pro-style range. Its fast heating and excellent simmering make it a good fit for a range of cooking styles. And I like the look of the star-shaped burners."

—Michael DiLauro, Product Information Specialist

F1 Thermador SGSX365FS

Type 36-inch gas

Price \$1,900

thermador.com



E1 Bosch NGM8054UC

Type 30-inch gas

Price \$1,100

This model offers excellent simmering, but its high-power burner wasn't among the fastest in our tests. It has five burners with auto-reignite, continuous grates, and a stainless surface for a pro-style look.
boschappliances.com



E2 Kenmore 32353

Type 30-inch gas

Price \$1,200

This model aced our simmering tests, though its highest-power burner wasn't among the fastest. It has a pro-style look with five burners and continuous grates.
kenmore.com



E3 LG LSCG306ST

Type 30-inch gas

Price \$1,100

Fast heating and impressive simmering make this cooktop a top pick. It has five burners (one of which is high-power), a stainless-steel surface, continuous grates, and center-mounted knobs.
lg.com



F2 GE Monogram ZGU385NSMSS

Type 36-inch gas

Price \$1,400

This model delivers superb simmering, but heating wasn't as fast as with the top-Rated Thermador. It has a stainless-steel surface, five burners (three are high-power), continuous grates, and center-mounted knobs.
geappliances.com



F3 GE Profile JGP975WEKWW

Type 36-inch gas

Price \$1,200

This cooktop offers superb simmering, but heating wasn't as fast as the top model. It has five burners (including one high-power), continuous grates, and center-mounted knobs.
geappliances.com



F4 Viking VGC5366BSS

Type 36-inch gas

Price \$2,200

This pro-look model offers excellent simmering, but heating wasn't as fast as the top model. It has six burners (three are high-power), continuous grates, and an auto-reignite feature.
vikingrange.com

Ratings

All tested products in performance order, within types.

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results		Features				
				High heat	Low heat	High-power elements	Medium-power elements	Low-power elements	Expandable elements	Touch controls	
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.		0100 P F G VG E							
A 30-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOPS											
✓	1	KitchenAid KECC604BBL	\$ 900	94	●	●	2	0	2	•	
	2	Jenn-Air JEC4430BS	1,400	94	●	●	2	0	2	•	•
✓	3	Maytag MEC7430WS MEC7630W	700	94	●	●	2	0	2		
✓	4	Kenmore 44273	1,150	93	●	●	2	1	1	•	•
✓	5	Kenmore 42733	640	91	●	●	2	0	2	•	
✓	6	Frigidaire Professional FPEC3085KS	950	90	●	●	1	3	0	•	
✓	7	GE Café CP350STSS	1,200	90	●	●	1	1	3	•	
✓	8	Electrolux Icon E30EC6E5S	1,200	88	●	●	1	2	2	•	
✓	9	LG LCE3081ST	1,000	87	●	●	1	1	2	•	•
✓	10	Whirlpool G7CE3034XP	700	86	●	●	2	0	2	•	
✓	11	GE Profile PP945BMBB	950	86	●	●	2	0	2	•	•
✓	12	Frigidaire FFEC3024LB	500	85	●	●	2	0	2		
✓	13	Bosch NET5054UC	900	85	●	●	1	2	1	•	•
	14	Jenn-Air JED4430WS	1,800	84	●	●	2	1	1	•	•
	15	Jenn-Air JEC9530BDS	900	83	●	●	1	1	2	•	
	16	KitchenAid KECC506RSS	900	77	●	●	1	1	2	•	
	17	Miele KM5656	1,600	77	○	●	2	1	1	•	•
	18	Thermador CES304FS	1,500	75	○	●	1	2	1	•	•
	19	GE PP912	800	75	●	●	2	0	2	•	
B 36-INCH ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOPS											
✓	1	Maytag MEC7536W	830	94	●	●	2	0	3		
✓	2	Maytag MEC7636W	1,100	94	●	●	2	0	3	•	
✓	3	Frigidaire Professional FPEC3685KS	1,000	90	●	●	1	3	1	•	
✓	4	Viking VEC536BSB	2,200	88	●	●	1	3	2	•	
C 30-INCH ELECTRIC INDUCTION COOKTOPS											
✓	1	Kenmore 43820	1,700	99	●	●	3	1	0		•
✓	2	GE Profile PHP900DMBB	1,400	99	●	●	2	2	0		•
✓	3	Bosch NIT5066UC	1,800	98	●	●	2	2	0		•
✓	4	Kenmore 43800	1,400	97	●	●	3	1	0		•
✓	5	Bosch NIT5065UC	1,800	97	●	●	2	0	2		•
	6	Jenn-Air JEI0430ADS	2,300	96	●	●	1	2	1		•
✓	7	KitchenAid KICU500XB	1,400	95	●	●	2	2	0		•
✓	8	Whirlpool GC13061XB	1,200	95	●	●	2	0	2		•
✓	9	LG LCE30845	1,800	93	●	●	1	2	1		•
D 36-INCH ELECTRIC INDUCTION COOKTOPS											
✓	1	Thermador CIT36XXB	5,000	92	●	●	2	1	1	•	•
	2	Jenn-Air JIC4536XS	2,100	90	●	●	5	0	0	•	•

What the symbols mean ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

✓ CR Best Buy These models offer the best combination of performance and price. All are recommended.

✓ Recommended These are high-performing models that stand out.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score reflects cooktop performance at high and low heat. The displayed score is out of a total of 100 points. **High heat** reflects how quickly the highest-power element heated a large pot of water to near-boiling. **Low heat** reflects how well the lowest-power element melted and held chocolate without scorching, and how the most powerful element, set to low, held tomato sauce below a boil. **Price** is approximate retail.

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results		Features						
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.		0100	High heat	Low heat	High-power burners	Medium-power burners	Low-power burners	Stainless steel	Glass ceramic	Porcelain enamel	Continuous grates
				P F G VG E									

E 30-INCH GAS COOKTOPS

✓	1	Bosch NGM8054UC	\$1,100	79	○	●	1	2	2	•			•
✓	2	Kenmore 32353	1,200	76	○	●	2	2	1	•			•
✓	3	LG LSCG306ST LCG3091ST	1,100	73	●	●	1	3	1	•			•
	4	GE PGP953SETSS Café CGP350SETSS	1,100	64	○	●	1	3	1	•			•
	5	Viking RDGSU2005B	1,200	60	○	●	2	2	1	•			•
	6	Frigidaire FPGC3087MS	1,000	51	○	○	2	2	1	•			•
	7	KitchenAid KFGS306VSS KFGU706VSS	1,100	37	●	●	1	3	1	•			•

F 36-INCH GAS COOKTOPS

✓	1	Thermador SGX365FS	1,900	81	●	●	3	2	0	•			•
✓	2	GE Monogram ZGU385NSMSS	1,400	80	○	●	3	2	0	•			•
✓	3	GE Profile JGP975WEKWW	1,200	80	○	●	1	2	2			•	•
✓	4	Viking VGC5366BSS	2,200	77	○	●	3	2	1	•			•
✓	5	GE Café CGP650SETSS Profile PGP986SETSS	1,400	77	○	●	1	3	1	•			•
✓	6	Electrolux EW36GC55GS	1,300	74	○	●	2	2	1	•			•
✓	7	LG LSCG366ST	1,300	74	●	●	2	2	1	•			•
✓	8	Bosch NGM8654UC	1,200	70	○	●	4	0	1	•			•
✓	9	Kenmore 32313 32333	1,100	69	●	●	2	2	1	•			•
	10	Whirlpool G7CG3665X	1,000	68	○	●	2	1	2			•	•
	11	Jenn-Air JGC9536BD	1,100	67	●	○	2	1	2		•		•
	12	Wolf CG365P/S	2,000	64	●	○	2	3	0	•			•
	13	Miele KM3474GSS	1,750	62	●	○	3	2	0	•			•
	14	Maytag MGC7536WS	800	55	○	○	2	2	1	•			•
	15	Whirlpool Gold GLS3665RS	1,100	54	●	●	3	2	0	•			•
	16	Kenmore 32249 3243[9]	600	52	○	○	1	3	1			•	•
	17	Frigidaire Gallery FGGC3645KS	900	48	●	●	2	2	1	•			•
	18	Jenn-Air JGD3536WS	1,900	47	○	●	3	1	1	•			•
	19	KitchenAid KGCK366VSS	1,000	45	○	●	2	1	2	•			•
	20	Jenn-Air JGD3536BS	2,000	38	●	●	3	1	1	•			•

Most & least
reliable brands

6,000 readers
sound off

GAS COOKTOPS

Bosch	3%
Kenmore	5%
GE	7%
KitchenAid	11%

ELECTRIC COOKTOPS

Whirlpool	5%
Kenmore	6%
GE	6%
Frigidaire	6%
KitchenAid	8%
Jenn-Air	10%

Source: Consumer Reports Annual Product Reliability Survey. That's what we found when we asked more than 6,000 readers who bought an electric or gas cooktop between 2011 and 2014 about their experiences. Differences of fewer than 4 points aren't meaningful. Models within a brand may vary, and design and manufacture changes may affect future reliability.

Convenient wall ovens

Double wall ovens can be stacked vertically, like these from Whirlpool, or horizontally—even placed under a counter, if that's where you prefer them.

Love to host a crowd? Tired of bending to use your range's oven? Consider including a wall oven or two in your design.

Lower prices have made wall oven and cooktop combinations more affordable. In fact, some combos cost less than some stand-alone ranges—especially pro-style models—though it's important to remember that installation adds to the cost.

Unlike a range, a wall oven allows you to put the oven exactly where you want it: at waist or eye level so that you won't have to bend to pull out heavy pans, or even under the counter or in an island or peninsula. Some manufacturers offer double ovens; other options include a self-cleaning mode,

a convection function, and 24-, 27-, or 30-inch widths. Gas models are available, but most wall ovens, including the models we've included in our Ratings, are electric.

Once again, we found that a high price doesn't necessarily guarantee top performance. Some of the more expensive models we tested scored only good in our baking or broiling tests. So shop carefully, using our Ratings and reliability data as a guide. And remember that you don't necessarily have to choose the same brand for your wall oven and cooktop.

How to choose

Consider the fuel you'll use.

The majority of wall ovens are electric; they usually have a larger capacity than similar gas models and don't require a gas connection. But remember that electric wall ovens need their own electrical circuit. No matter how it's fueled, be sure to have your new wall oven professionally installed.

Suit your own style.

A convection feature uses a fan and sometimes extra heating elements to circulate heated air throughout the oven. That can speed cooking, but you'll usually pay about \$250 more

for the convenience. Models that excelled at broiling produced well-seared, evenly cooked burgers in our tests. If you're an avid baker, look for high scores in our baking tests, which focus on even browning in multi-rack baking.

Take manufacturer capacity claims with a grain of salt.

An oven's usable capacity might be far less than what a manufacturer claims. That's because manufacturers often measure unusable nooks and crannies, and leave broiler elements out of their calculations. We consider racks and spacing.



Details that count

■ Electronic touchpad controls

Setting and monitoring precise temperatures are easier with a digital display. Touch-sensitive controls are available on some models. Whichever controls you choose, you'll often find a control lockout that lets you disable them, an important feature in households where the control panel is within a curious child's reach.

■ Covered element

A cover over the bottom baking element catches drips and spills. You won't have to reach around the element to wipe out the bottom of the oven, making cleanup faster and easier.

■ Oven window

A window without a decorative grid gives a clearer view of what's inside, so you can judge progress without opening the door.

■ Self-cleaning cycle

A special cycle removes spills and spatters in electric and gas wall ovens. An automatic safety lock on high-temperature self-cleaning models prevents the oven door from being opened until the oven has cooled. Some models have a countdown display that shows the time left in the self-cleaning cycle.

■ Temperature probe

This electronic thermometer is inserted into your food; it displays the internal temperature on the oven's control panel to show when the food is done.

■ Variable broil

Most electric ovens have this feature, which offers adjustable settings for foods that need slower or faster cooking.





RECOMMENDED MODELS

Wall ovens

“I bought the Whirlpool WOS92ECOAH single wall oven, \$1,500, for my own kitchen remodel. I like the true convection feature, because it allows for three-rack baking and speeds up roasting time.”

—Michael DiLauro, Product Information Specialist

B1 Whirlpool WOS92ECOAH

✓ **CR Best Buy**

Price \$1,500

whirlpool.com



B2 Maytag MEW9530AW

✓ **CR Best Buy**

Price \$1,400

This 30-inch wall oven offers impressive baking, turning out evenly browned cakes and cookies, and is superb at broiling. It even aced our tough self-cleaning tests.

The large oven is equipped with a convection feature.

maytag.com



B3 KitchenAid KEBS109BWW

Price \$2,000

This model has a large oven that's equipped with convection, a potential time-saver for roasting. It offers impressive baking and self-cleaning, and superb broiling.

kitchenaid.com



B4 GE PT9050FSSS

Price \$2,600

This model delivers impressive baking, broiling, and self-cleaning, but other top picks were better and cost a lot less. The GE is the only one that lets you control oven functions from your smart phone.

geappliances.com

Most & least reliable brands

More than 9,600 readers sound off

ELECTRIC WALL OVENS

GE	8%
Bosch	10%
Kenmore	10%
Whirlpool	11%
Frigidaire	11%
KitchenAid	12%

Source: Consumer Reports Annual Product Reliability Survey. Our findings are based on 9,600 readers who bought an electric wall oven between 2010 and 2014 about their experiences. Differences of fewer than 4 points aren't meaningful. Models within a brand may vary, and design and manufacture changes may affect future reliability.

Repair or replace?

The survey examined products through the first eight years of ownership.

ELECTRIC		
1-3 yr. REPAIR	4-6 yr. CONSIDER REPAIR	7+ yr. REPLACE
Median repair cost \$248		



B5 Whirlpool WOS51ECOAS

✓ CR Best Buy

Price \$1,300

Though it lacks convection, this model was almost as capable as its more expensive brandmate. It evenly browned cakes and cookies, was excellent at turning out nicely browned broiled burgers, and aced our tough self-cleaning tests.

whirlpool.com



B6 Maytag MEW7530AW

✓ CR Best Buy

Price \$1,000

This model was the least expensive of the more than two dozen tested, yet outperformed wall ovens that cost two to three times as much. The Maytag's oven is large and very good at baking and excellent at broiling. The self-cleaning feature aced our tough tests.

maytag.com



B7 Bosch HBL5450UC

Price \$1,900

This oven offers impressive baking, broiling, and self-cleaning. It includes a convection feature, temperature probe, and a combination of glass-touch and dial controls.

bosch-home.com

Select Ratings Recommended models only from 32 tested.

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results				Features			
					Baking	Broiling	Oven capacity	Self-cleaning	Width (in.)	Covered element	Convection mode	Temperature probe

A DOUBLE ELECTRIC WALL OVENS

✓	1	Whirlpool WOD93ECOAS	\$2,500	80	○	●	●	●	30	•	•	
✓	2	Maytag MEW9630A	2,700	80	○	●	●	●	30	•	•	
✓	3	KitchenAid KEBS209BSP	3,500	79	○	●	●	○	30	•	•	•
✓	4	GE PT9550SFSS	3,600	73	○	○	○	○	30	•	•	•
✓	5	Whirlpool WOD51ECOAS	2,000	72	○	●	●	●	30	•		
✓	6	Maytag MEW7630A	1,700	72	○	●	●	●	30	•		
✓	7	Bosch HBL5650UC	2,805	72	○	○	○	○	30	•	•	•
✓	8	Bosch HBL8650UC	3,115	72	○	○	○	○	30	•	•	•

B SINGLE ELECTRIC WALL OVENS

✓	1	Whirlpool WOS92ECOAH	1,500	80	○	●	●	●	30	•	•	
✓	2	Maytag MEW9530AW	1,400	80	○	●	●	●	30	•	•	
✓	3	KitchenAid KEBS109BWW	2,000	79	○	●	●	○	30	•	•	•
✓	4	GE PT9050SFSS PT7050SFSS	2,600	73	○	○	○	○	30	•	•	•
✓	5	Whirlpool WOS51ECOAS	1,300	72	○	●	●	●	30	•		
✓	6	Maytag MEW7530AW	1,000	72	○	●	●	●	30	•		
✓	7	Bosch HBL5450UC	1,900	72	○	○	○	○	30	•	•	•

What the symbols mean ●Excellent ○Very good ○Good ○Fair ●Poor

✓ CR Best Buy These models offer the best combination of performance and price. All are recommended.

✓ Recommended These are high-performing models that stand out.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score reflects oven capacity and baking, broiling, and self-cleaning ability. The displayed score is out of a total of 100 points.

Baking reflects whether cakes and cookies baked on two racks were evenly browned. **Broiling** is based on even browning of a pan of burgers and high-heat searing ability. (The performance of double wall-oven models is based on the tested oven in the single electric wall-oven category.) **Price** is approximate retail.

A partly transparent hood can take up less visual space, which can help in tight quarters.



Better ventilation

The right range hood can clear your kitchen of cooking odors and airborne grease—and look great doing it.

Before you decide to include an over-the-range microwave with a built-in exhaust fan in your plans, think again. Those models might save space, but even the ones that vent best can't eliminate smoke, steam, and fumes as well as a capable range hood, especially if you often cook using high-heat settings or the front burners. But take heart: Range hoods have become as fashionable as they are practical. Most

now offer the commercial look of stainless steel. Certain models even have slim hood canopies that you can retract when not in use, giving your kitchen a feeling of added space and less clutter.

Best of all, you don't have to pay a pro-style price to get a stylish hood. You can spend \$1,000 or more for some models, but you'll find plenty of smart options for a fraction of that price.

We haven't tested the products shown here, but they represent the range of choices you'll find.



Details that count



Bosch

■ Number of fan speeds

Most hoods offer three to six fan speeds; some have variable speeds. We recommend a minimum of two speeds: a high-speed setting for when you're using multiple pots and pans or combining the cooktop with oven use, and a very low, very quiet setting when you just want to remove lingering odors. You don't need more than three speeds. A single variable-speed switch that lets you adjust fan speed smoothly without steps can add flexibility and convenience.

■ Exhaust timer

This convenient feature automatically turns off the exhaust fan when it's no longer needed.

■ Thermostat control

This is a feature you should be aware of if you're considering an above-the-range microwave with built-in ventilation instead of a separate range hood. Here's how it works: To protect the microwave's electronics from being damaged by high temperatures, a built-in sensor automatically turns on the fan if the temperature below the hood gets too high. Sounds like a good idea, but we don't recommend thermostat control because if you're cooking with oil and your pan catches fire, the exhaust fan may automatically turn on, drawing more air to the fire and perhaps increasing the risk of a kitchen disaster. Our take: This is one feature to skip.

Make it last

These five simple steps will help you make sure that your range hood ventilates most efficiently.

1. Follow installation directions. Range hoods are usually installed 18 to 30 inches above a cooktop, giving you room to work while preventing steam from escaping to the sides.

2. Vent it to the outside.

Doing that will ensure that the range hood vents as much smoke,

cooking odors, and heat as possible. Be sure to use solid, smooth-

walled metal ductwork and have the seams sealed with good-quality ventilation-duct sealant, not just duct tape.

3. Keep duct runs short and straight. Both of those steps will help maximize airflow. The larger the diameter or cross section of duct that can be installed, the better it can minimize flow restriction and help avoid adding to a ventilation hood's noise.

4. Prevent backdrafts. Use a wall or roof cap with a damper outside to prevent precipitation and outdoor air from flowing into the kitchen.

5. Clean the filters. Wash or replace the filters underneath the hood every one to three months, or more if you cook often.



How to choose

Don't size down.

This is one time when bigger is often better. Any hood that you consider should be at least as wide as the cooking surface it will be installed above. And avoid downdraft ventilation systems, which have been unimpressive in our tests.

Select the right style.

An **undercabinet** hood is mounted on the bottom of a wall cabinet. If it's on an exterior wall, ductwork can be routed through the

cabinet and then outside, or directly through the back of the hood. In other cases, ductwork must be routed through the cabinet. **Wall-chimney** hoods can work where there are no cabinets. They're mounted with exposed vent stacks on the wall. **Island** hoods are mounted to and vented through ductwork in the ceiling. They lack a wall or cabinets alongside them to help funnel fumes, so consider one that's at least 6 inches wider than the cooktop.

CFM isn't everything.

Manufacturer claims about airflow tout cubic feet per minute (CFM) of air exhausted. More airflow does result in faster venting but doesn't necessarily guarantee better capture and removal of smoke and fumes.



Drawer-style microwaves fit conveniently underneath the counter.

Versatile microwaves

Equipped with features like convection baking and even grilling, today's microwaves add flexibility.

Not just for popcorn or reheating yesterday's leftovers anymore, some of the latest microwave oven models can function as a full-fledged second oven. Many automate heating functions for a wide range of food and offer convection, speed-cooking, and even grilling capabilities.

More good news: Cooking

with a microwave won't heat up your kitchen the way a hot oven will. Capacity is improving, too. Major brands are increasing usable space without stretching overall size by using recessed turntables and walls. But certain manufacturers exaggerate size by counting wasted space in the corners. Our measurements might be 50 to

60 percent of what's claimed, so take a large platter to the store to be sure. And see our Ratings for the real deal.

Tip Say watt? As you shop, you'll find that microwave ovens come in a range of wattages. But when we tested three GE microwaves, we found that the differences in wattage among the ovens didn't make much difference in their performance.

How to choose

Pick a type and size.

Countertop microwave ovens usually cost less than over-the-range microwaves and are a fine choice if counter space isn't a concern. Though compact models tend to cost the least, mid-sized and large models offer more room for not much more money. (Our Ratings start with mid-sized models, the best-selling type.) Over-the-range microwave ovens save counter space by taking the place of a range hood. They vent themselves and the cooktop below, but are unlikely to capture steam, heat, and smoke as well as a dedicated range hood.



Weigh the features.

A sensor helps prevent undercooking and overcooking by turning off the microwave when food is done. Shortcut keys take the guesswork out of preparing an ever-expanding

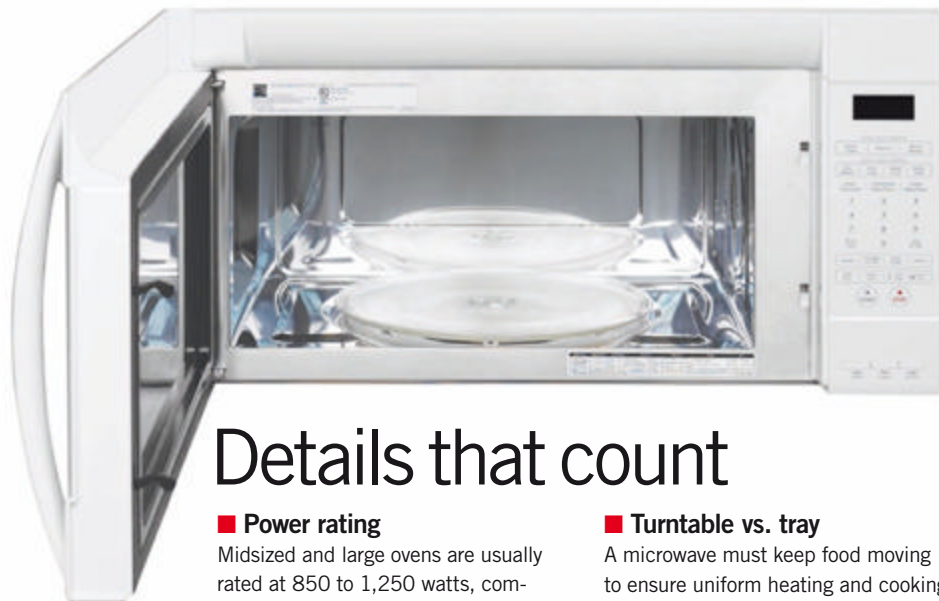
menu of common foods, and a convection mode can help provide browning like a conventional oven. Microwave models that can hang beneath a wall cabinet will free up some counter space.

Question capacity claims.

Certain models effectively deliver as little as half of the claimed interior space if you use the included turntable or moving platter. So check the Ratings for our measurements, and take your largest casserole dish to the store to make sure it fits comfortably inside. Also consider models with a sliding tray that moves from side to side and fits large plates or those that allow you to turn the turntable off when you're using a large platter or dish.



This microwave's rounded back allows it to fit into corners, making it ideal for tight spaces.



Details that count

■ Power rating

Mid-sized and large ovens are usually rated at 850 to 1,250 watts, compact at 600 to 800 watts. More watts should produce more heat. But you probably won't notice differences of 100 watts or so.

■ Removable racks

These allow you to cook several foods at once. But taller items might require removing a rack.

■ Turntable vs. tray

A microwave must keep food moving to ensure uniform heating and cooking. Some have replaced a round turntable with a rectangular tray that slides from side to side, a plus for platters.

■ Convection cooking, grilling, and browning

Convection might add to a model's price, but good grilling and browning performance shouldn't.

■ Sensor

Certain models have more than 20 auto-settings. They can tailor a heating cycle to the food, but you'll still need to know the portion size. Convenient? Sure, but paying extra for shortcut keys you might not use makes little sense.

■ Numeric keypad

Use it to set cooking times and power levels. It might be easier to use; many have preset cooking times for a variety of dishes.

■ 1-minute or 30-second key

They extend the preset cooking time, maintaining the power level selected. They also allow quick adjustments to your previous settings.



Product guide

COUNTERTOP MICROWAVES

These models are best for kitchens with lots of counter space. You can mount some models below or within cabinetry.

Pros Countertop microwaves usually cost less than over-the-range models and simply plug into an ordinary outlet; no installation is required.

Cons Midsized and large models we tested take about 3 square feet of valuable counter space.



KitchenAid

OVER-THE-RANGE MICROWAVES

Space-saving over-the-range microwaves (sometimes called OTRs) can be vented to the outside and can save space in a small kitchen.

Pros Over-the-range microwaves leave the counter workspace clear.

Cons They cost more, and installation might require an electrician. And even the best don't vent as well as a capable, correctly sized range hood.



Jenn-Air

BUILT-IN MICROWAVES

Built-in microwaves are installed within custom cabinets, flush with the bottom of flanking cabinets. Certain built-in models don't have finished sides, nor do they have vents.

Pros Built-ins keep counters clear and allow you to have a range hood.

Cons They're relatively expensive. Installation adds to the cost and might require an electrician.



Amana

RECOMMENDED MODELS

Midsized countertop



A1 Avanti MO 1250TW

Type Midsized countertop

Price \$130

This 1.2-cubic-foot, 1,000-watt model offers auto-defrost, and touchpad controls. It offers superb ease of use, and very good defrosting and heating evenness, and a child lock. It comes with a 7-year magnetron warranty.

avantiproducs.com



A2 LG LCS1112ST

Type Midsized countertop

Price \$140

This 1.1-cubic-foot, 1,000-watt model has an auto-defrost feature and touchpad controls. It provides top-notch defrosting and ease of use. Heating evenness and speed of heating was very good.

lg.com



A3 Kenmore 72123

Type Midsized countertop

Price \$150

This 1.2-cubic-foot, 1,100-watt was one of the quietest midsized models tested and was impressive in heating evenness and defrosting. It has a sensor that helps prevent over- or undercooking and a child lock.

kenmore.com



“The Kenmore Elite 74229 microwave, \$180, scored well in all our tests and the preprogrammed settings for reheating foods, making frozen pizza, and popping popcorn makes it really convenient to use.”

—Larry Ciufo, Senior Project Leader

B8 Kenmore Elite 74229

Type Large countertop

Price \$180

kenmore.com

Large countertop



B1 Panasonic Inverter NN-H965BF

Type Large countertop

Price \$180

This 2.2-cubic-foot, 1,250-watt model has a sensor and auto-defrost. It's very good at heating evenness and fast at heating water, but it's relatively noisy on high. A large 9x15-inch glass baking dish rotates on its turntable.

panasonic.com

Over-the-range



D1 GE Profile PVM9215SFSS

Type Over-the-range

Price \$550

This 2.1 cubic-foot, 1000-watt model provides very good heating evenness and excellent defrosting, ease of use and quietness. It has detailed prompts, a popcorn program, and a wire rack for bi-level cooking; it fits a 9x15-inch baking dish. Stainless or stainless-look option is available.

geappliances.com



D2 GE JVM3160RFSS

✓ CR Best Buy

Type Over-the-range

Price \$250

This 1.6 cubic-foot, 1,000-watt model offers very good heating evenness and excellent defrosting, ease of use, and quietness. It has detailed prompts, popcorn program, and is available in stainless or stainless-look option.

geappliances.com

Ratings

All tested products in performance order, within types.

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results							Features				
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Heating evenness	Defrosting evenness	Speed of heating	Microwaving noise	Ease of use	Venting (air flow)	Usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Watts	Detailed prompts	Convection mode	Sensor

A MIDSIZED COUNTERTOP

1	Avanti MO1250TW	\$130	70	●	●	●	●	●	●	NA	0.8	1.2	1000				
2	LG LCS1112ST	140	68	●	●	●	●	●	●	NA	0.6	1.1	1000				•
3	Kenmore 72123	150	68	●	●	○	●	●	●	NA	0.7	1.2	1100			•	•
4	Kenmore 66227 [Item # 1345111] (Kmart) 73114 [Item # 52378411] (Kmart)	105	68	○	●	○	●	●	●	NA	0.6	1.1	1100				
5	Frigidaire FFCM1134L[S]	120	68	●	●	○	●	●	●	NA	0.5	1.1	1100				•
6	Panasonic Genius Prestige NN-SD681S	180	68	●	●	●	○	●	●	NA	0.7	1.2	1200			•	
7	West Bend AGO28PLV	110	67	●	●	○	●	○	●	NA	0.5	1.1	1000				•
8	Danby DMW111KBLDB	90	65	●	●	○	●	●	●	NA	0.6	1.1	1000				
9	Panasonic Prestige NN-SD372S	140	60	○	●	○	●	●	●	NA	0.5	0.9	950				
10	Sharp R331ZS	125	60	○	●	○	●	●	●	NA	0.7	1.1	1000				•
11	Cuisinart CMW-200	250	57	●	○	○	●	●	●	NA	0.7	1.2	1000		•		•
12	LG LCSP1110[ST]	230	57	○	●	○	●	○	●	NA	0.6	1.1	1000				•
13	GE Profile PEM31SFSS	320	53	●	●	●	●	●	●	NA	0.6	1.1	800			•	•
14	Frigidaire FFCT1278L[S]	300	52	○	●	○	○	●	●	NA	0.8	1.2	1100	•	•		•
15	Sharp Steamwave AX-1100S	500	51	●	○	○	●	○	●	NA	0.6	1	1150			•	•
16	Half Time AAC34-S	200	48	●	●	●	○	●	●	NA	0.7	1.2	1000		•		•
17	Cuisinart CMW-100	180	43	●	●	○	●	●	●	NA	0.7	1	1000				•
18	RCA RMW1138	80	42	○	●	●	●	●	●	NA	0.7	1.1	1000				•

B LARGE COUNTERTOP

✓	1	Panasonic Inverter NN-H965BF	180	76	●	●	●	○	●	NA	1.4	2.2	1250	•		•	
✓	2	LG LCRT2010[ST]	200	75	●	●	●	●	●	NA	1.2	2	1200	•		•	•
✓	3	GE Profile JES2251SJ[SS]	280	75	●	●	●	●	●	NA	1.5	2.2	1200	•		•	•
	4	GE JES2051SN[SS]	250	72	●	●	●	●	●	NA	1.2	2	1200	•		•	•
	5	Maytag UMC5200BA[B]	270	72	●	●	●	●	●	NA	1.1	2	1100	•		•	
	6	Oster OGG61403	120	71	●	●	●	●	●	NA	0.8	1.4	1200				•
	7	Panasonic Prestige NN-SD997[S]	280	70	●	○	●	●	●	NA	1.4	2.2	1250			•	•
	8	Kenmore Elite 74229 Elite 75223	180	70	●	●	●	●	●	NA	1.3	2.2	1200			•	•
	9	Frigidaire Gallery FGM0205K[F]	320	69	●	●	●	●	●	NA	1.2	2	1200	•		•	•
	10	KitchenAid KCM52255BSS	540	69	●	○	●	●	●	NA	1.3	2.2	1200			•	•
	11	Whirlpool WMC50522AWS	270	69	●	○	●	●	●	NA	1.3	2.2	1200			•	•
	12	GE Profile PEB7226SFSS	330	67	●	●	○	●	●	NA	1.3	2.2	1100	•		•	•
	13	Panasonic Inverter NN-CD989[S]	650	67	○	●	○	●	●	NA	1.2	1.5	1100	•	•	•	•
	14	Kenmore 73163	170	67	●	●	○	●	●	NA	0.9	1.6	1100			•	•
	15	LG LCRT1510SV	190	67	○	●	●	●	●	NA	0.9	1.5	1200	•		•	•
	16	Sharp R551ZS	160	66	○	●	○	●	●	NA	1.1	1.8	1100			•	•

What the symbols mean ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

✓ CR Best Buy These models offer the best combination of performance and price. All are recommended.

✓ Recommended These are high-performing models that stand out.

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is based mainly on evenness of heating, ease of use, and auto-defrosting ability. The displayed score is out of a total of 100 points. **Heating evenness** reflects how evenly a model reheated a dish of cold mashed potatoes. **Defrosting evenness** is based on how well the automatic-defrost program defrosted a pound of frozen ground beef. **Speed of heating** is based on the temperature rise of water heated. **Microwaving noise** reflects how quiet the oven is while microwaving on high. **Ease of use** includes how easy it is to set the

microwave without referring to the instructions. **Venting (air flow)** is based on the volume of air drawn in by the OTR's internal fan on the highest setting. **Usable capacity** is the usable space based on our measurements and excludes the corner spaces for models with rotating turntables. Note that most over-the-range models allow you to turn the rotation off to fit large dishes. (A few countertop models also offer that feature.) With the rotation off, measured capacity approximates claimed. But food might require extra tending and stirring. **Price** is approximate retail.

	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results							Features					
Recommended	Rank	Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.		Heating evenness	Defrosting evenness	Speed of heating	Microwaving noise	Ease of use	Venting (air flow)	Usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Watts	Detailed prompts	Convection mode	Sensor	Stainless/SS-look option
			0100 P F G V G E													

B LARGE COUNTERTOP continued

17	Magic Chef MCD1611ST	\$140	66	●	●	●	○	●	NA	1.1	1.6	1100				●
18	Sharp R651ZS	180	65	○	●	○	●	●	NA	1.3	2.2	1100			●	●
19	Kenmore Elite 74153 Elite 75153	300	65	●	●	○	●	●	NA	0.8	1.5	1000	●	●	●	●
20	Frigidaire FFCE2278L[S]	190	65	●	●	●	○	○	NA	1.3	2.2	1200	●		●	●
21	Electrolux EI24MO45IB	470	64	●	○	○	○	●	NA	1.2	2	1100	●		●	
22	Magic Chef MCD1811ST	140	64	○	●	●	●	●	NA	1.1	1.8	1100				●
23	LG LCRT1513ST	150	63	○	●	●	●	●	NA	0.9	1.5	1100			●	●
24	Frigidaire FFCE1439LB	150	63	●	●	○	●	●	NA	0.7	1.4	1100			●	
25	Sharp R930CS	530	63	○	●	○	●	○	NA	1.1	1.5	900	●	●	●	●
26	Panasonic Genius Prestige NN-SE982S	300	63	●	●	●	○	●	NA	1.4	2.2	1250			●	●
27	Panasonic Genius Prestige NN-SE782S	200	62	●	●	●	○	●	NA	0.9	1.6	1250			●	●
28	Danby DMW14SA1BDB	150	61	○	○	○	●	●	NA	0.7	1.4	1100			●	
29	Magic Chef MCD1311ST	130	61	●	○	○	●	●	NA	0.9	1.3	1100				●
30	LG LCS1410[SW]	170	60	●	○	●	○	●	NA	0.9	1.4	1200	●		●	
31	LG LCS1413SB	170	60	○	●	○	●	●	NA	0.9	1.4	1100			●	
32	Emerson MW1337SB	110	59	○	●	○	●	●	NA	0.7	1.3	1000				●
33	Sharp R409YV R431ZS	130	57	○	●	○	●	○	NA	0.9	1.3	1000				●
34	Frigidaire FFCE1638L[S]	150	57	○	○	○	●	●	NA	0.9	1.6	1100	●		●	●
35	Whirlpool WMC30516A[S]	210	56	○	○	●	●	●	NA	0.9	1.6	1200			●	●
36	Haier MWM13110G[SS]	105	50	○	○	○	●	●	NA	0.6	1.3	1000				●

C BUILT-IN COUNTERTOP

1	Sharp SuperSteam Oven AX-1200[K]	900	57	●	●	●	○	●	NA	1	1.1	700	●	●	●	
2	Sharp Carousel R-1214	380	46	●	●	●	●	●	NA	0.9	1.5	1100	●		●	●

D OVER-THE-RANGE

✓	1	GE Profile PVM9215SFSS	550	81	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.9	2.1	1000	●		●	●
✓	2	GE JVM3160RFSS	250	79	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.9	1.6	1000	●			●
✓	3	GE JVM7195SFSS	400	76	●	●	●	●	●	●	0.9	1.9	1100	●		●	●
✓	4	LG LMH2235ST	450	74	●	●	○	●	●	○	1.4	2.2	1000	●		●	●
	5	Whirlpool WMH53520CS	350	70	●	●	○	●	●	○	0.9	2	1000	●		●	●
	6	Samsung ME21F707MJT	500	68	●	●	○	○	●	●	0.9	2.1	1000	●		●	●
	7	Electrolux IQ-Touch EI30BM60MS	630	67	●	●	○	●	●	○	0.9	1.8	1050	●	●	●	●
	8	Kenmore Elite 80373	700	67	●	●	●	●	●	●	0.9	1.8	1050	●	●	●	●
	9	GE AVM4160DFBS	250	67	●	●	●	●	●	○	0.8	1.6	1000	●			●
	10	Samsung SMH2117[S]	500	67	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.8	2.1	1000	●		●	●
	11	Maytag MMV4205DS	350	67	●	●	○	●	●	○	1	2	1000	●		●	●
	12	Frigidaire Gallery FGMV174K[M]	350	65	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.8	1.7	1000	●		●	
	13	LG LMV1813[SW]	300	65	●	●	●	●	●	○	0.8	1.8	1100	●		●	●
	14	Whirlpool Gold WMH76719CS	550	65	●	●	○	●	●	○	0.9	1.9	1100	●	●	●	●
	15	LG LMHM2017[SW]	450	65	●	●	●	●	●	●	0.9	2	1100	●		●	●
	16	Maytag MMV5219DS	400	64	○	○	○	●	●	○	1.2	2.1	1000	●		●	●
	17	Electrolux Icon E30MH65QPS	900	64	○	●	●	●	●	○	0.9	1.8	1050	●	●	●	●
	18	Whirlpool WMH73521CS	450	63	○	●	○	●	●	○	0.9	2.1	1100	●		●	●
	19	Bosch 300 Series HMV3052U	400	62	●	●	●	●	●	○	0.8	1.6	1000				●
	20	LG LMH2016[ST]	300	62	●	●	●	●	●	●	0.8	2	1100	●		●	●
	21	Kenmore 80339	300	61	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.8	1.7	1000	●		●	●
	22	Kenmore 80353	570	61	●	●	●	●	●	●	0.9	2.1	1100	●		●	●
	23	Samsung ME179KFET[SR]	600	61	●	●	○	●	●	○	0.8	1.7	950				●

Ratings

✓ CR Best Buy ✓ Recommended ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results							Features			
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.		<div><div></div><div>0100</div><div>P F G VG E</div></div>	Heating evenness	Defrosting evenness	Speed of heating	Microwaving noise	Ease of use	Venting (air flow)	Usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Watts	Detailed prompts	Convection mode

D OVER-THE-RANGE continued

24	Maytag	MMV4203W[B]	\$ 280	61	●	●	○	○	●	○	0.9	2	1000	●			
25	GE	JVM6172SFSS	280	61	●	●	○	●	●	○	0.7	1.7	1000	●			●
26	Electrolux	EI30BM55H[S]	700	60	○	●	○	●	●	○	1	2	1000	●	●	●	●
27	Ikea	Framtid 501.423.37	250	60	●	●	○	●	●	○	0.8	1.6	950	●			●
28	Amana	AMV1150VA[B]	190	60	●	●	○	●	●	○	0.8	1.5	1000	●			
29	Dacor	Discovery PCOR30S	1,270	60	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.7	1.1	850	●	●	●	●
30	Fisher & Paykel	CMOH30SS	750	60	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.7	1.1	850	●	●	●	●
31	Samsung	SMH1622[S]	170	60	○	●	○	●	●	●	0.8	1.6	850				●
32	Kenmore	80323	260	59	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.8	1.6	1000	●			●
33	Maytag	MMV6190DS	550	59	○	●	○	●	●	○	0.9	1.9	1000	●	●	●	●
34	Samsung	Chef Collection ME21H9900AS	600	59	○	●	○	○	●	●	1	2.1	1000	●		●	●
35	KitchenAid	KHHC2090S[SS]	1,100	59	●	○	●	●	●	○	1.1	2	1200	●	●	●	●
36	Frigidaire	Gallery FGMV175QF	360	58	○	●	○	●	●	○	0.8	1.7	1000	●		●	●
37	Kenmore	80349	350	58	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.8	1.7	1000	●		●	●
38	GE	Profile PVM1790SR[SS]	600	57	●	●	●	●	●	○	0.8	1.7	1000	●	●	●	●
39	Electrolux	IQ-Touch EI30SM55JS	650	57	●	●	○	●	●	●	1	2	1000			●	●
40	LG	LMV1831ST	300	56	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.8	1.8	1000			●	●
41	GE	Profile Advantium PSA1201R[SS] Profile Advantium PSA1200R[]	950	56	●	●	○	●	●	○	0.8	1.7	925	●	●	●	●
42	Samsung	ME18H704SFS	250	55	○	●	●	●	●	○	0.9	1.8	1000			●	●
43	Bosch	800 Series HMV8052U	700	55	○	●	●	●	●	●	0.8	1.8	1000		●	●	●
44	Maytag	MMV6186W[S]	680	55	●	●	○	●	●	○	0.8	1.8	1000	●		●	●
45	Jenn-Air	JMV9196CS	1,000	55	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.9	1.9	1000	●	●	●	●
46	Samsung	MC17F808KDT	540	55	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.8	1.7	950	●	●	●	●
47	Bosch	500 Series HMV5052U	500	54	○	●	●	●	●	●	1	2.1	1100			●	●
48	LG	LMV1683[ST]	270	54	○	●	○	○	●	○	0.7	1.6	1000	●			●
49	GE	JVM1750DP[BB] JVM6175DFWW	280	54	●	●	●	○	●	○	0.8	1.7	1000	●		●	●
50	Kenmore	Elite 80363	630	54	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.7	1.5	900	●	●	●	●
51	Samsung	SMH1926[S] (Lowe's)	360	53	●	●	●	●	●	●	0.8	1.9	1000	●		●	●
52	Sharp	R-1875T	500	53	●	●	○	●	●	●	0.7	1.1	850	●		●	
53	Whirlpool	WMH32517AS	320	53	○	●	○	○	●	●	0.4	1.7	1000	●		●	●
54	Frigidaire	WWV150K[W]	190	52	●	○	○	●	●	○	0.8	1.5	900				
55	Hotpoint	RVM1535DM[WW]	190	51	○	●	●	●	●	●	0.8	1.5	950	●			
56	KitchenAid	KHMS2040BSS	520	51	○	●	○	●	●	○	0.9	2	1000	●			●

Most & least reliable brands

More than 37,000 readers sound off

OVER-THE-RANGE MICROWAVES

Whirlpool	6%	KitchenAid	8%
Maytag	6%	GE	8%
Frigidaire	7%	LG	9%
Kenmore	7%	Samsung	16%

Source: Consumer Reports Annual Product Reliability Survey. Our findings are based on 37,000 over-the-range microwave ovens that readers bought new between 2010 and 2014. Differences of fewer than 3 points aren't meaningful. Models within a brand may vary, and design and manufacture changes may affect future reliability.

Recommended	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results										Features			
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Heating evenness	Defrosting evenness	Speed of heating	Microwaving noise	Ease of use	Venting (air flow)	Usable capacity (cu. ft.)	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Watts	Detailed prompts	Convection mode	Sensor	Stainless/SS-look option	
				0100 P F G VG E														

D OVER-THE-RANGE continued

57	Frigidaire FFMV162L[S] FFMV164L[]	\$ 250	50									0.8	1.6	1000				
58	Viking D3 Series RDMOR200SS	650	50									0.9	1.5	950				
59	Amana AMV2175VAS	290	50									0.9	1.7	1000				
60	Viking VMOR205[SS]	1,300	50									0.7	1.1	850				
61	Maytag MMV5208W[W]	320	50									1.2	2	1000				
62	Samsung ME17H703SHS	300	49									0.7	1.7	1000				
63	Electrolux IQ-Touch EI30SM35QS	600	49									0.7	1.5	900				
64	Jenn-Air JMV8208WS	750	49									1.4	2	1000				
65	Whirlpool WMH31017A[S]	250	49									0.9	1.7	1000				
66	Maytag MMV1164[W]	210	49									0.9	1.6	1000				
67	KitchenAid KHMC1857W[SS]	650	49									0.9	1.8	1000				
68	Sharp R-1405	220	48									0.8	1.4	950				
69	LG LMVH1711[ST]	550	47									0.8	1.7	950				
70	Jenn-Air JMV9186W[S]	900	47									0.8	1.8	1000				
71	Frigidaire FFMV154CL[S]	450	47									0.7	1.5	900				
72	Magic Chef MCO165UB	170	46									0.8	1.6	1000				
73	Frigidaire FFMV152CLB	400	46									0.7	1.5	900				
74	Sharp R-1871	600	45									0.6	1.1	850				
75	Samsung ME16H702SES	250	44									0.8	1.6	1000				
76	Frigidaire Professional FPBM189K[F]	480	44									1	2	1000				
77	Frigidaire Gallery FGMV154CL[F] Gallery FGMV153CL[]	480	43									0.7	1.5	900				
78	Bertazzoni Professional Series KO30PROX	700	38									0.8	1	950				
79	Sharp R-1514	330	36									0.9	1.5	1000				

Ultimate speed cooker

You can put an entire dinner on the table using the microwave by following these cooking tips:

Fish Sole, flounder, and other thin fillets turn out tender and moist. Simply cover and cook until the fish is milky white and reaches an internal temperature of 145° F.

Vegetables Add 1 to 3 tablespoons of water to a bowl, and season and cover the veggies with wax paper or a paper towel to hold in moisture and reduce splatters.

Chicken A whole chicken won't taste great out of the microwave, but you can cut cooking time in the oven or on an outdoor grill by first partially cooking chicken pieces in a microwave oven. The same goes for long-cooking vegetables, such as winter squash.

Melted chocolate Place chopped pieces in a microwave-safe bowl and heat on medium for 1 minute, then stir. Continue in 15-second increments, stirring after each, until the chocolate is fully melted.



Repair or replace?

The survey examined products through the first eight years of ownership.

OVER-THE-RANGE

1-2 yr.
REPAIR

3-4 yr.
CONSIDER REPAIR

5+ yr.
REPLACE

Median repair cost \$132

TIP Some top-rated models are in the \$200-to-\$300 range, so you might be better off with a replacement if you're facing an expensive repair bill.



For a sleek look, choose a model with hidden controls. Some have a small display to show remaining cycle time.

Clean dishes

Our top dishwashers save water and energy. (And they'll make your dishes sparkle, too.)

Tougher new rules have slashed the energy and water dishwashers can use to get the government's Energy Star seal. But our latest tests show that you don't have to live with dirty dishes or endless cycles. Better yet, some of the biggest energy misers are easy on your wallet.

Dishwashers built since January 2012 must use about 9 percent less electricity and 27 percent less water to meet the federal EPA's Energy Star standard. Our top picks qualify for that coveted seal. Energy Star standards for dishwashers could add a wash-performance component as soon as the spring of 2015. The Department of Energy, which sets the underlying standards, bases them on lightly soiled loads. Consumer Reports has urged them to use much dirtier loads, as we do in our tests.

We slather plates with egg yolks, peanut butter, raspberry jam, and other stubborn goo to see which dishwashers made our clean-plate club. Our results show that it's easy to pay a tidy sum for so-so performance. You can also pay less and get more noise than you expected. Read on for what else to consider.

How to choose

In addition to better energy and water efficiency, today's dishwashers offer a host of options. Use these tips to decide which are most useful for you.

Match your habits.

Our picks clean well enough for you to skip prerinsing. If you want to prerinse, skip extra-cost power-scrubbing modes. And if you're concerned about noise, opt for a manual-clean filter rather than a self-cleaning filter, which tends to be noisier.

Look for features that boost convenience.

Dishwashers that score well for ease of use usually include adjustable racks and lots of flatware slots. Some mid-priced models have third racks that let you lay down large utensils or short cups. Many also have fold-down tines, which let you fit large or odd-shaped dishes and other dinnerware. Stainless-steel tubs resist stains better than white plastic tubs, though some plastic tubs are speckled gray for less noticeable staining.



Kenmore

Check the dimensions.

The width and depth of every conventional dishwasher is intended for a cavity measuring 24x24 inches. But the height of what you're considering could pose a installation challenge if—since the time you installed the old dishwasher—you replaced your kitchen floor or put in a new countertop that dips lower than flush with the bottom edge. Either or both changes could leave less vertical space and require you to buy a slightly shorter dishwasher. Before settling on a model, measure your space and ask the seller for the full height range, accounting for adjustment of the leveling feet.



Check the controls. Some models include interactive touch controls, but the usual touchpads are fine if they're clearly marked. Also look for a cycle-time display if you opt for controls that are hidden when the door is closed. Many models with hidden controls display a light or other indicator to tell you the dishwasher is running, a plus for extra-quiet models.

Repair or replace?

The survey examined products through the first eight years of ownership.

1-3 yr.
REPAIR

4-5 yr.
CONSIDER REPAIR

6+ yr.
REPLACE

Median repair cost \$153

TIP If your home has hard water, a whole-house water softener might improve cleaning results.



Details that count

■ Half-load option

It's always more efficient to wash a full load of dishes. But if you frequently wash half-loads—say, just glasses—a model with a half-load option might help you save some energy and water compared with running a half-load in a dishwasher without that feature.



■ Adjustable racks and loading aids

Racks that move up and down (pictured above), adjustable tines, silverware and stemware holders, and third-row utensil racks let you organize dishwasher contents. Those features increase flexibility, especially when you cook for a crowd, and they can help accommodate large and odd-shaped items, such as cookie sheets and stockpots. Flatware slots also tend to improve cleaning by preventing silverware from nesting.

■ Soil sensor

It adjusts water use and cycle length to the amount of soil on the dishes. A sensor can improve energy efficiency.

■ Special wash cycles

Most dishwashers come with at least three cycles: light, normal, and heavy (for pots and pans). Some also offer pot-scrubber, soak/scrub, steam-clean, or china/crystal

cycles, or a sanitizing cycle, which raises the water temperature above the usual 140° F. The extra options sound good, but the three basic cycles should be enough for most chores, even for baked-on food.



■ Stainless-steel tub

Steel is more durable and stain-resistant than plastic, but dishwasher models with a plastic tub tend to cost far less. Even a standard plastic tub should last longer than most people tend to keep a dishwasher.

■ Filters

These keep wash water free of food that could be redeposited on clean dishes. There are two filter types: manual and self-cleaning. Most manufacturers have moved to manual ones because most self-cleaning filters, which use a grinder to pulverize debris and flush it down the drain with the water, are convenient but can be noisier.



■ Rinse/hold cycle

This lets you rinse dirty dishes before you're ready to start a full cycle, reducing potentially unpleasant odors and preventing soil from setting while you accumulate enough dirty dishes to run a full load.

Expert advice: load it right

What better way to end a fine meal than arguing over forks—up or down?—and fine china—yes or no? Personal preferences differ, but careful placement guarantees that dishes will be cleaned properly. Here are nine tips from our experts:

1. Make sure you have hot water coming out of the faucet before running the dishwasher or you will be washing with cold water.
2. Skip prerinsing, a real water waster, but scrape off food.
3. Load large items on the sides and in the back to avoid blocking water and dispenser.
4. Place the dirtier side of dishes toward the center of the machine, allowing for more exposure to the spray (some manufacturers' instructions may differ). Dishes shouldn't rest against each other.
5. Put dishwasher-safe plastic and delicate items on the top rack.
6. Rest glasses on prongs to prevent water from accumulating in them and breakage.
7. Load forks and spoons with handles down, but place knives with handles up. If your dishwasher has an open basket, mix flatware to prevent pieces from sticking together.
8. Place items with baked-on food facedown and toward the sprayer on the bottom rack.

9. Avoid putting brass, bronze, cast-iron, wood, or china with gold leaf in the machine. To keep china from chipping, don't allow dishes to touch other items, especially pots and pans. If you decide to hand-wash your fine china and porcelain, line your sink with an old towel to prevent chipping, and use a mild dish detergent.



Special cycles

Most dishwashers come with at least three cycles: light, normal, and heavy (pots and pans), with many newer models also including "quick" or "express" cycles that claim to clean lightly soiled loads in as little time as 20 minutes. Some offer single-rack, pot-scrubber, soak/scrub, steam clean, china/crystal, or sanitizing cycles as well. The three basic cycles should be enough for most chores, even for baked-on food. A sanitizing option that raises water temperature above the typical 140° F doesn't necessarily deliver better cleaning.

Wash zones

Some newer models have designated a certain part of the dishwasher for heavily soiled items intended for washing in a special cycle. Such zones don't necessarily run the whole time—with certain models, it's only for a few minutes—but they so far seem to work as promised.



RECOMMENDED MODELS



“Besides stellar washing, drying, and energy efficiency, it has an industry first—a self-cleaning, ultrafine filter so you don’t have to clean the gunk out yourself.”

— Larry Ciufo, Senior Project Leader

1 KitchenAid KDTM354DSS

Price \$1,200

Cycle time/water usage 125 min./4 gal.
kitchenaid.com



2 Kenmore Elite 12793

Price \$1,050

Cycle time/water usage 145 min./5 gal.
In addition to top-notch performance, this model offers a motorized spray arm that reverses direction if a utensil falls through the racks and blocks the arm’s rotation. It also has a stainless-steel tub and an adjustable upper rack. Some controls are hidden, and you’ll need to clean the filter manually. But the model is mediocre at drying plastic items, and there’s no time-remaining display.
kenmore.com



3 Kenmore Elite 12783

Price \$1,000

Cycle time/water usage 135 min./5 gal.
Top-notch washing and stellar energy and water efficiency are the chief strengths of this model. It’s also among the quietest models. It has a soil sensor, a stainless-steel tub, a delayed-start option, ample flatware slots, and an adjustable upper rack and tines. Some controls are hidden. But it’s only mediocre at drying plastic items.
kenmore.com



4 Bosch Ascenta SHX3AR7[5]UC

✓ CR Best Buy

Price \$730

Cycle time/water usage 95 min./6 gal.
This one aced our wash test and was very good at drying plastic items. It was among the quietest models, and was especially energy-efficient. Pluses include a soil sensor, a delayed-start option, ample flatware slots, an adjustable upper rack, adjustable tines.
boschappliances.com



5 KitchenAid KDFE454CSS

Price \$1,500

Cycle time/water usage 140 min./5 gal.
Superb washing, energy efficiency, and quietness make this model a top pick. Pluses include a soil sensor, a stainless-steel tub, a delayed-start option, ample flatware slots, and an adjustable upper rack and tines. On the minus side, this model is mediocre at drying plastic items, and it has no time-remaining display.
kitchenaid.com



6 Thermador Topaz Series DWHD640JFM

Price \$1,500

Cycle time/water usage 125 min./6 gal.
Top-notch washing paired with stellar energy and water efficiency are chief strengths of this model, though it’s fairly pricey. It aced our wash test and was also among the quietest models. Pluses include a soil sensor, a stainless-steel interior, and a light that shines on the floor to indicate that the unit is running.
thermador.com



7 Bosch 800 Plus Series SHX7PT55UC

Price \$1,300

Cycle time/water usage 125 min./5 gal.
This model did great in our wash test and is among the quietest models. It’s also very energy-efficient. Other pluses include a soil sensor, stainless-steel tub, water softener, and time-remaining display that’s projected onto the floor. All controls are hidden, and you’ll need to clean the filter manually.
boschappliances.com



8 Bosch 500 Series SHP65T55UC

Price \$900

Cycle time/water usage 125 min./5 gal.
This model provides top-notch washing, drying, and energy efficiency, and it’s quiet. Other pluses include a soil sensor, a stainless-steel tub, a delayed-start option, an adjustable upper rack (plus a third rack), and hidden controls. All controls are hidden, and you’ll need to clean the filter manually.
boschappliances.com



9 Miele Futura Dimension G5575SCSF

Price \$1,950

Cycle time/water usage 150min./5 gal.

This pricey model aced our wash test and was excellent for drying plastic items. It was fairly quiet, and it was also especially energy-efficient. Pluses include a soil sensor, stainless-steel interior, and time-remaining display. For flexibility, it has delayed start, ample flatware slots, an adjustable upper rack, and adjustable tines. All controls are hidden, and you'll need to clean the filter manually.

mieleusa.com



10 Bosch 300 Series DLX SHX53TL5UC

Price \$850

Cycle time/water usage 125 min./5 gal.

This has plenty going for it, but other models were quieter. It aced our wash test and was very energy-efficient. Other pluses include a soil sensor, a stainless-steel interior, and a "speed perfect" cycle that uses more water and energy to finish more quickly. All controls are hidden, and you'll need to clean the filter manually.

boschappliances.com



12 GE Profile PDT750SSFSS

Price \$1,100

Cycle time/water usage 140 min./6 gal.

Superb washing and efficiency, along with special bottle-washing jets on the top rack, make this model worth a second look. The unit was also fairly quiet. Other pluses include a soil sensor and stainless interior. For flexibility, it has delayed start, ample flatware slots, and an adjustable upper rack and tines. Some controls are hidden, and you'll need to clean the filter manually. But it was only so-so for drying plastic items.

geappliances.com

Ratings

Rec.	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results					Features						
					Washing	Energy use	Noise	Ease of use	Cycle time (min.)	Ample flatware slots	Adjustable upper rack	Sensor	Self-cleaning filter	Hidden controls	Interior material	Stainless/SS-look option

CONVENTIONAL DISHWASHERS

✓	1	KitchenAid KDTM354DSS	\$1,200	85	●	●	●	●	125	●	●	●	●	some	stainless-steel	●
✓	2	Kenmore Elite 12793 Elite 12833, Elite 12803	1,050	85	●	●	●	●	145	●	●	●	●	some	stainless-steel	●
✓	3	Kenmore Elite 12783 Elite 12813, Elite 12763, Elite 12773	1,000	82	●	●	●	●	135	●	●	●	●	some	stainless-steel	●
✓	4	Bosch Ascenta SHX3AR75JUC Ascenta SHX3AR5JUC, Ascenta SHE3AR7JUC, Ascenta SHE3ARFJUC (Lowes)	730	81	●	●	●	●	95	●	●	●	●	all	stainless/plastic	●
✓	5	KitchenAid KDFE454CSS	1,500	81	●	●	●	○	140	●	●	●	●		stainless-steel	●
✓	6	Thermador Topaz Series DWHD640JFM Sapphire Series DWHD650JFM, Sapphire Series DWHD-650JFP, Topaz Series DWHD640JFP	1,500	80	●	●	●	●	125	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
✓	7	Bosch 800 Plus Series SHX7PT55UC 800 Plus Series SHE7PT55UC, 800 Plus Series SHP7PT55UC, 800 Plus Series SHX8PT55UC, 800 Plus Series SHV7PT53UC	1,300	80	●	●	●	●	125	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
✓	8	Bosch 500 Series SHP65T55UC 500 Series SHX65T55UC, 500 Series DLX SHP65T55UC, 500 Series SHE65T55UC	900	80	●	●	●	●	125	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
✓	9	Miele Futura Dimension G5675SCSF Futura Dimension G5605SC, Futura Dimension G5670SCVi	1,900	80	●	●	●	●	150	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
✓	10	Bosch 300 Series DLX SHX53TL5UC 300 Series SHE53TL5UC, 300 Series DLX SHE53TL5UC, 300 Series SHP53TL5UC, 300 Series DLX SHV53TL5UC, 300 Series SHX53TL5UC, 300 Series SHV53TL5UC	850	80	●	●	○	●	125	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
✓	11	Bosch 800 Series SHE68T55UC 800 Series DLX SHX68TL5UC, 800 Series DLX SHE68TL5UC, 800 Series SHX68T55UC, 800 Series SHV68T53UC	950	79	●	●	●	●	125	●	●	●	●		stainless-steel	●
✓	12	GE Profile PDT750SSFSS	1,100	79	●	●	●	●	140	●	●	●	●	some	stainless-steel	●
✓	13	Blomberg DWT55300SS DWT25300SS	850	79	●	●	○	●	130	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
	14	GE Profile PDT760SSFSS	1,500	78	●	●	●	●	140	●	●	●	●	some	stainless-steel	●
	15	Blomberg DWT54100SS DWT24100SS	750	78	●	●	○	●	85	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
	16	Thermador Emerald Series DWHD440MFM	1,300	78	●	●	●	●	130	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●

✓ CR Best Buy ✓ Recommended ● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is mostly washing performance and includes energy and water use (not shown), noise, ease of use, and cycle time. Displayed scores are rounded; models are listed by precise overall score. **Washing** is normal-cycle results with a very dirty full load. **Energy use** is energy and water use for a normal cycle. **Noise** covers listener judgments and sound-level measurements. **Ease of use** includes convenience factors and loading. **Cycle time** (rounded to the nearest 5 minutes) is for a normal cycle with a very dirty full load; it includes temperature-boost option and, if available, heated dry. Under **brand & model**, bracketed letters or numbers mean color code. **Price** is approximate retail.

Ratings

Brand & model			Price	Overall score	Test results					Features						
Rec.	Rank	Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Washing	Energy use	Noise	Ease of use	Cycle time (min.)	Ample flatware slots	Adjustable upper rack	Sensor	Self-cleaning filter	Hidden controls	Interior material	Stainless/SS-look option
CONVENTIONAL DISHWASHERS continued																
17		KitchenAid Architect Series II KDTE554CSS	\$1,600	78	●	●	●	○	145	●	●	●		some	stainless-steel	●
18		Kenmore 13693 13403	750	78	●	●	○	●	160		●	●		some	stainless-steel	●
19		Kenmore 1328[3] 1304[], 1327[]	650	77	●	●	○	●	120	●	●	●		all	plastic	●
20		Kenmore 13223 13543	650	77	●	●	○	●	160		●	●			stainless-steel	●
21		Blomberg DWT55500SS DWT25500SS	900	77	●	●	○	●	115	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
22		GE Café CDT725SSFS GDT720SSFS	1,000	77	●	●	○	●	145	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
23		Frigidaire Gallery FGHD2472PF	700	77	●	●	●	●	130	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
24		GE GDF540HMFES	600	77	●	●	●	○	155	●	●	●			stainless/plastic	●
25		GE GDT580SSFS	800	76	●	●	●	●	155	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
26		Thermador DWH651JFP DWH651JFM	2,200	76	●	●	●	●	120	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
27		Maytag MDB8959SBS	800	75	●	●	○	●	115	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
28		Kenmore 13202 13492	450	75	●	●	○	●	155	●	●	●			plastic	●
29		Bosch 800 Plus Series SHE9PT55UC 800 Plus Series SHX9PT55UC, 800 Plus Series SHV9PT53UC	1,950	75	●	●	●	●	130	●	●	●		some	stainless-steel	●
30		Whirlpool WDT720PADM	460	75	●	●	●	○	155	●		●		all	plastic	●
31		LG LDS5040ST	700	75	●	●	●	●	110	●	●	●	●		stainless-steel	●
32		Samsung DW80F800UWS	800	75	●	●	●	●	140	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
33		GE GDT550HSDSS	650	74	●	●	●	●	155	●	●	●		some	stainless/plastic	●
34		GE Monogram ZDT870SPFSS	1,800	74	●	●	●	●	150	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
35		Kenmore 15693	850	74	●	●	●	○	130	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
36		Samsung Chef Collection DW80H9970US	1,450	74	●	●	●	●	155	●	●	●		some	stainless-steel	●
37		Miele Futura Crystal G5225SC Futura Crystal G5285SCVi	1,400	74	●	●	○	●	145	●	●	●			stainless-steel	●
38		Kenmore 13473 13093	500	73	●	●	○	○	160		●	●		some	plastic	●
39		GE GDT680SSHSS	700	73	●	●	○	●	155	●	●	●		some	stainless-steel	●
40		Kenmore Elite 1396[3]	1,000	73	●	●	●	○	135	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
41		LG LDF751[ST] LDF7561[ST]	900	72	●	●	●	●	145	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
42		Samsung DMT800RH[W]	750	72	●	●	○	●	120	●	●	●	●	all	stainless-steel	●
43		LG LDS5540ST	800	71	●	●	●	●	145	●	●	●	●		stainless-steel	●
44		Dacor Renaissance RDW24S Distinctive DDW24S	1,700	71	●	●	○	●	150			●		all	stainless-steel	●
45		Whirlpool WDT920SADM WDF760SADM	720	70	●	●	●	●	160	●	●	●		some	stainless-steel	●
46		Miele Futura Classic G4281SCVi Futura Classic G4225SCS, Futura Classic G4286SCF	1,100	70	●	●	●	○	145	●	●	●			stainless-steel	●
47		Maytag MDB8969SDM MDB7949SDM, MDB6949SDM	800	70	●	●	○	●	170	●	●	●	●	some	stainless-steel	●
48		Asko D5894XXL[HS] D5654XXL[HS]	2,400	69	●	●	●	●	130	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
49		GE GDF520PSD[SS] GDF510PGDI[], GDT530PSD[SS], GDF520PGDI[], GDF510PSD[SS], GDF510PMD[SA]	500	69	●	●	●	○	150	●		●			plastic	●
50		GE Monogram ZDT800SSFS	1,500	69	●	●	●	●	165	●	●	●		some	stainless-steel	●
51		KitchenAid KDTE404DSS KDHE404DSS	1,150	69	●	●	●	●	175	●	●	●			stainless-steel	●
52		Maytag MDB4949SDM MDB5969SDM	650	69	●	●	○	●	170	●	●	●	●		stainless-steel	●
53		Asko D5634XXL[HS] D5434XXL[]	1,350	68	●	●	○	●	150			●		some	stainless-steel	●
54		Whirlpool Gold WDT770PAY[M]	700	68	●	●	○	●	115	●	●	●		all	plastic	●
55		KitchenAid KDFE304DSS KDE204DSS, KDE304DSS, KDE334DSS	950	68	●	●	●	○	175	●	●	●			stainless-steel	●
56		Miele Futura Diamond G5975SCSF Futura Diamond G5915SCi	2,700	67	●	●	●	●	130	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
57		Frigidaire Gallery FGHD2465N[F] Professional FPHD2485N[F]	600	66	●	●	○	●	130		●	●	●	some	plastic	●
58		Jenn-Air Trifecta JDB8700AW[P]	1,550	66	●	●	●	○	170	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
59		Whirlpool WDF540PADM WDF520PADM, WDF320PADM	500	66	●	●	○	○	115	●		●			plastic	●
60		GE Artistry ADT521PGFBS	500	66	●	●	○	○	155	●		●		some	plastic	●
61		Scholtes LFDS3XL60HZ	1,400	66	●	●	●	●	105	●	●	●		all	stainless-steel	●
62		Frigidaire Gallery FGBD2445N[F]	550	65	●	●	○	●	120		●	●	●		plastic	●
63		Kenmore 1326[3] 1325[], 1329[]	750	65	●	●	○	●	130	●	●	●			stainless-steel	●

☒ CR Best Buy
 ☒ Recommended
 ☒ Excellent
 ☒ Very good
 ☐ Good
 ☐ Fair
 ☐ Poor

		Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results				Features							
Rec.	Rank	Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested model.			Washing	Energy use	Noise	Ease of use	Cycle time (min.)	Ample flatware slots	Adjustable upper rack	Sensor	Self-cleaning filter	Hidden controls	Interior material	Stainless/SS-look option

CONVENTIONAL DISHWASHERS continued

64	Smeg	STA8614XU	\$1,000	65					120					all	stainless-steel	
65	KitchenAid	KDTE704DSS KDHE704DSS, KDTES04DSS	1,800	65					175					some	stainless-steel	
66	Bosch	Ascenta DLX SHX4AT75UC Ascenta SHX4AT55UC	700	64					120					all	stainless/plastic	
67	Whirlpool	WDL785SAAM	875	64					135						stainless-steel	
68	Whirlpool	Gold WDF530PAY[W] Gold WDT710PAY[]	440	63					105						plastic	
69	KitchenAid	KDTE104DSS KDHE104DSS	900	63					135					some	stainless-steel	
70	Samsung	DW7933LRA[SR]	600	62					150						stainless-steel	
71	Jenn-Air	Trifecta JDB8200AW[S]	1,200	61					170					all	stainless-steel	
72	Whirlpool	Gold WDF730PAY[M]	600	61					115						plastic	
73	Viking	Professional VDB451[SS] FDB451	1,950	61					205					all	stainless-steel	
74	Samsung	DMT300RF[W]	500	60					170						stainless-steel	
75	Electrolux	Wave-Touch EW24ID80QS	1,100	60					200						stainless-steel	
76	Jenn-Air	JDB3200AW[W]	1,100	59					125					all	stainless-steel	
77	Frigidaire	Gallery FGID2474QF Professional FPID2495QF	700	58					120					all	stainless-steel	
78	Frigidaire	Gallery FGCD2456QF	650	58					120						stainless-steel	
79	Electrolux	IQ-Touch EI24ID30QS	800	58					120					all	stainless-steel	
80	Electrolux	IQ-Touch EI24ID50QS	1,000	57					120					all	stainless-steel	
81	Frigidaire	Gallery FGBD2438PF	500	57					130						plastic	
82	Frigidaire	Gallery FGBD2434PF	400	55					125						plastic	
83	Amana	ADB1100AWW	300	54					160						plastic	
84	Electrolux	Icon EDW7505HP[S]	1,400	54					125					all	stainless-steel	
85	Summit	DW2432SS	650	48					110						stainless-steel	
86	Haier	DWL3225SD[SS] DWL2825DD[]	480	45					120						stainless-steel	
87	Haier	DWL7075MC[SS] DWL4035MC[]	750	44					120					all	stainless-steel	
88	Viking	Professional VDB450E[SS] Designer Series DFB450E	1,800	44					170					all	stainless-steel	
89	Fagor	LFA75IT	700	43					135					all	stainless-steel	
90	Kenmore	15112	300	43					110						plastic	
91	Whirlpool	Gold WDT910SAY[M] Gold WDT790SAY[], Gold WDF750SAY[]	800	43					125					all	stainless-steel	
92	Ikea	Renlig 802.222.43	500	43					120						plastic	
93	Hotpoint	HDA3600DDWW	380	38					110						plastic	
94	Whirlpool	WDF310PAA[W] WDF310PLA[], WDF310PCA[]	350	35					115						plastic	
95	Frigidaire	FBD2400KS	310	34					90						plastic	
96	Amana	ADB1400PY[S]	380	34					115						plastic	

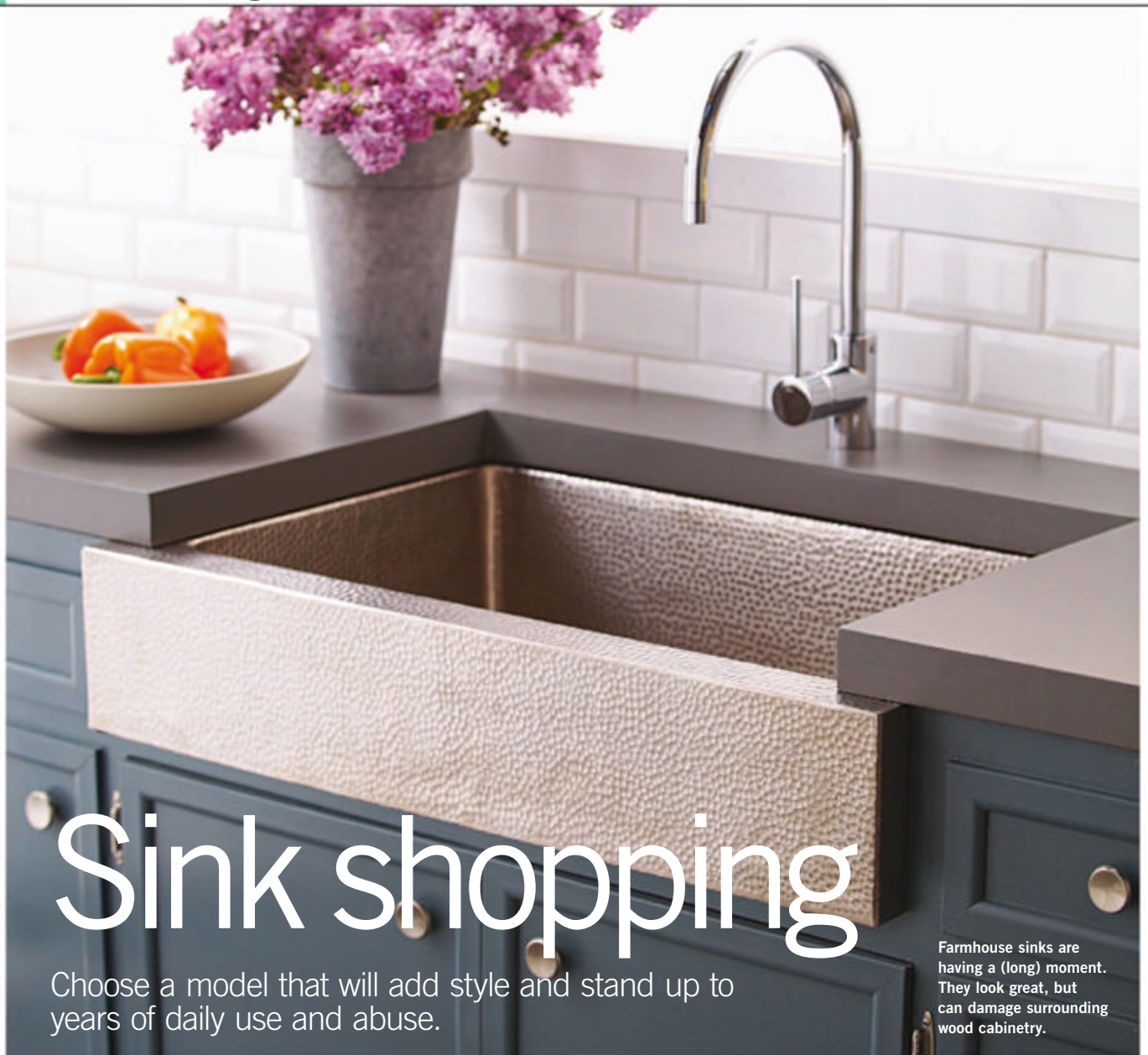
Most & least reliable brands

Almost 70,000 readers sound off

DISHWASHERS

Bosch	9%	Maytag	15%
Whirlpool	10%	Frigidaire	16%
GE	13%	KitchenAid	18%
Miele	13%	LG	18%
Kenmore	14%	Samsung	24%

Source: Consumer Reports Annual Product Reliability Survey. Our findings are based on 70,000 dishwashers that readers bought new between 2010 and 2014. Differences of fewer than 3 points aren't meaningful. Models within a brand may vary, and design and manufacture changes may affect future reliability.



Sink shopping

Choose a model that will add style and stand up to years of daily use and abuse.

Farmhouse sinks are having a (long) moment. They look great, but can damage surrounding wood cabinetry.

You'll find a lot of options when you start shopping for a new sink, many of them at low prices. Good news: Saving don't mean sacrificing quality. Our tests indicated that price doesn't always indicate performance. For months we stained, scoured, dropped objects, and put hot pots in 18 double-bowl sinks. We compared thick, heavy-gauge stainless steel with thinner versions, and heavy cast iron with light-weight acrylic and trendy fireclay. We found that the manufacturer wasn't as important as the material, which is why the Ratings are listed by material. Here's what else:

Finish matters more than thickness. We tested 18- to 23-gauge stainless-steel sinks. (The lower the gauge, the thicker the steel.) Contrary to what some companies claim, we found that expensive, thicker-gauge stainless didn't hold up better than thinner versions. They all

withstood stains. They also resisted heat and dings, though they did dent when we dropped a 5-pound weight—similar to a heavy pot—from a height of as little as 4 inches. Sound-absorbing pads on the sink's exterior bottom and sides minimized the noise of running water better than spray-on sound-insulating coatings. And sinks with polished or glossy surfaces showed scratches and stains more than those with matte finishes.

Color requires compromises. You can add color to your kitchen by choosing a solid surfacing, enameled steel, enameled cast iron, acrylic, or fireclay sink. But each material has a weakness. Almost all were damaged in our impact tests. Fireclay cracked after our toughest drop tests. The acrylic sinks didn't chip, but they did melt slightly when we "accidentally" left a hot pot in them. Solid-surfacing sinks fared only somewhat better.

How to choose

If you're keeping your current countertop and faucet, your new sink will need to match the old sink's cutout area and the number of faucet holes. Replacing all three? Keep these points in mind when shopping for a new sink:

Consider the style.

Drop-in sinks, also called top-mounts or self-rimming sinks, fit in the counter and can be used with any countertop material. They're often the least expensive option and the simplest to install. **Undermount sinks** are installed beneath the counter and require waterproof countertop materials, such as stone or solid surfacing. **Seamless installations**, where the sink and counter are made of the same material, have a nice, clean look. But because they're made as a unit, if the sink or counter is damaged, you'll have to replace both.

Apron-front (or farmhouse) sinks usually have a single deep basin with an exposed front.



They usually require a special sink cabinet, but now some Kohler sink models can be dropped into existing cabinets. **Tile-in** sinks have flat edges and square corners, and can be mounted at the same level as tile countertops.

Be sure it isn't too deep.

Sinks are usually 6 to 12 inches deep. Deeper models reduce splashes, but it might be uncomfortable to reach the bottom. Remember that undermounted sinks will be up to 1½ inches lower than a drop-in.



Pick a bowl.

Double-bowl sinks let you soak a pot in one bowl while you rinse in the other. Just be sure that at least one of the bowls is wide enough to fit large pots or roasters. The easiest way to do that is to take one with you to the store. Or consider a double-bowl sink with one large bowl and a

smaller one. A single large bowl might be better for smaller spaces. Rectangular-shaped sinks are standard. D-shaped bowls have a curved back and offer more space front to back. Rear drains provide for more usable storage space in the sink cabinet but will probably require additional plumbing.



Product guide

TOP-MOUNT (drop-in, self-rimming)

Best for a tight budget. It sits directly on top of the counter. Top-mounted sinks work with any counter-top material and are the simplest type to install.

But grime tends to build up around the lip of the sink. And top-mounts can detract from the look of stone countertops.

Price \$100 to \$500



Elkay top-mount



FARMHOUSE (apron-front)

Best for many kitchen styles. Stainless-steel models work well with modern designs; copper or enameled cast iron suits a country style. It's usually a deep single bowl with the faucet installed in the counter or wall.

But farmhouse sinks are pricey and might require special cabinets. Plus water can drip onto the cabinet below, causing damage to the finish or even the wood.

Price \$900 to \$3,700

UNDERMOUNT

Best for a sleek look and easy cleanup. You can wipe spills and crumbs from counters directly into the sink. Faucets are installed into the counter or mounted on a wall behind the sink.

But this type is usually more expensive and limited to waterproof solid-surface countertop materials, not laminate counters or most woods.

Price \$200 to \$1,000



Swanstone Granite Nero



Houzer Zero Radius

TROUGH

Best for use as a prep or bar sink because it's long and narrow—from 8 to 14 inches wide and up to 50 inches long. Longer versions can be used by more than one person at a time.

But they're expensive and more fun than functional. And they might require custom cabinetry; typical sink cabinets aren't designed for such a long, narrow fixture.

Price \$500 to \$2,100

Material matters

Style is important, but the material your sink is made from could determine how well it performs, and lasts.

Stainless: More people buy stainless-steel kitchen sinks than any other type. Our tests showed that thicker gauge-steel isn't necessarily better (see page 126).

Enamel: These sinks, sold in two versions (enamel on cast iron or lighter, less expensive enamel on steel), are available in many colors and are easy to clean. Our hot pot test didn't damage them, but when we dropped a 5-pound weight, similar to dropping a heavy pot, enamel-on-steel sinks chipped or cracked. Enamel on cast iron chipped when we dropped a sharp, light object, similar to a knife, on them. Damaged enamel can cause the metal underneath to rust.

Acrylic: Acrylic sinks might look similar to enamel but they scratch more easily and heat can be damaging. Our hot pot melted the surface.

Solid surface: These sinks can be paired with counters made of the same material for a seamless look. In our tests high heat and dropping a sharp, light object, similar



to a knife, damaged solid surfacing.

Fireclay: This heavy, heat-cured clay comes in a wide range of colors. It withstood

stains, scouring, and heat in our tests. But resisting chips and cracks from dropped objects was a challenge.

Accessorize it

Gone are the days when a kitchen sink was just a rectangular stainless-steel hole in the counter. Today you have not only a wide array of sizes, shapes, and configurations to choose from, but also, from several manufacturers, à la carte accessories—such as drop-in cutting boards and the utensil holders pictured below—that can turn your sink into a multipurpose prep and cleanup zone.



Ratings

All tested products in performance order.

Material	Price	Overall score	Resists					
			Stains	Abrasion	Sharp impact	Blunt impact	Heat	Noise
		0100 P F G VG E						
Stainless steel	\$100-\$600	83	●	●	●	○	●	○
Solid surfacing	200-500	80	●	●	○	●	●	●
Enameled steel	100-350	77	○	●	●	●	●	○
Enameled cast iron	150-450	74	○	●	●	●	●	○
Acrylic	75-200	71	●	○	●	●	●	○
Fireclay	550-800	66	●	●	○	●	●	○

What the symbols mean ● Excellent ○ Very good ○ Good ○ Fair ● Poor

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score summarizes performance in all tests. **Stains** shows resistance to 15 common foods and cleaning products. **Abrasion** reflects resistance to damage from nylon and metal scouring pads. **Impact** shows resistance to damage from blunt and sharp objects dropped from up to 20 inches. **Heat** gauges resistance to damage from a pot filled with oil and heated to 400° F. **Noise** is based on sound transmission from a stream of water and the impact of a sharp metal object. Our tests for sink and countertop materials are different, which is why the scores of materials may vary. **Price** is approximate retail.



Faucet finder

How to choose

Consider spout style and faucet function.

Straight-spout models are compact and often inexpensive, but you might need to move the faucet to fit a big pot under it. Gooseneck models have higher clearances but can cause splashing if your sink is shallow.

No matter which type you pick, make sure the faucet head swings far enough to reach the entire interior of the sink. Also choose a faucet that is proportional to the size of the sink.

Match your sink holes.

Most sinks come with mounting holes drilled for faucets. If you aren't changing sinks, you'll need to match what you have or get a base plate to cover extra holes. The base plate can also be used to cover holes in your countertop, if that's where your faucet will be installed.

Factor in installation.

Replacing a faucet and sink together is simpler because the faucet can be installed before the sink is put in place. Fittings you can simply tighten with a screwdriver also streamline the job. Long hoses allow for connections lower in the sink cabinet, where tools are easier to use.

Today's faucets offer high style and dripless performance. Here's how to choose the best model for your style and your budget.

Money doesn't buy happiness, and it doesn't always buy a better faucet. While you can certainly plunk down \$600 on a kitchen faucet, you can also find high quality for as little as \$80. In fact, we found few performance differences between the cheapest and priciest models we tested. All but the flimsiest models boast better valves and tough finishes. And most of the latest faucets have lifetime warranties that cover leaks and stains, so we based our advice on finish type, not brand or model.

But our tests did find big differences in how finishes perform. Physical vapor deposition (PVD) finishes

resisted our best attempts at scratching them. But corrosives such as drain cleaner can stain them slightly. Chrome, another popular finish, is pretty durable but can be scratched if you rub it with a heavy-duty scouring pad. Use common sense when cleaning your faucet, and it will stay scratch-and-stain-free for much longer.

We tested single-handled faucets, most with pull-out spouts that combine the spray head and spout for added flexibility and convenience. But our findings apply equally to other faucets. The products shown haven't been tested, but they represent the choices you'll find.

Product guide

There are two main types of faucets: single lever and two-handled. If you are replacing an older faucet, your choice might be limited to the configuration of your current sink or counter. But if you are buying a new sink and faucet at the same time, you'll have to decide. Here are the pros and cons of each:



SINGLE LEVER

You move the lever to one side or the other for hot or cold water, or somewhere midway to mix it. Some people prefer a faucet with a spout on a retractable hose—referred to as a pull-out faucet.

Pros Single-lever faucets can be easier to install and use than faucets with two separate handles. They might take up less counter space. And they're more convenient if your hands aren't clean and you want to avoid getting the handle dirty.

Cons Those with side-mounted levers might have less clearance from the backsplash, making it more likely for you to bang your knuckles as you turn the handle. And side-mounted levers can be more difficult to use if your hands are covered with cooking muck.

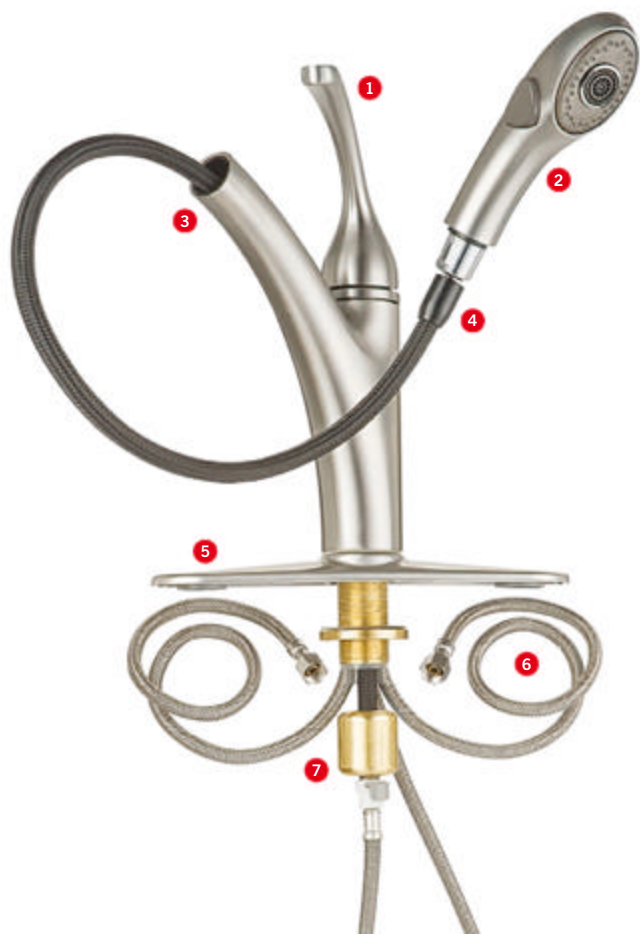


TWO SEPARATE HANDLES

This traditional faucet setup has hot and cold handles placed to the left and right, respectively, of the spout.

Pros Two handles might allow you to make slightly more precise temperature adjustments than a single lever allows. This style offers a traditional look that can be a good match for a farmhouse-style sink.

Cons A faucet with two separate handles can be less convenient if your hands aren't clean and you're trying not to soil the handles.



Details that count

1. Single lever

It mixes hot and cold water, and takes up less counter space than dual-handled models. Those that can be turned off without losing the last temperature setting are better than models that require you to reset the temperature every time you turn on the faucet.

2. Spray/stream selector

Finger-friendly buttons on the side or top of the spray head allow you to easily go from spray to stream. Best are those that stay in the last chosen mode even after you turn the water off and back on again.

3. PVD finish

A physical vapor deposition finish is scratch-resistant, though some staining can occur. It is available in nickel, copper, pewter, bronze, gold, and polished brass.

4. Pull-out spout

This combines a spout and a spray head with a swivel that increases the hose's flexibility. Hoses should be long enough to reach around and into the corners of the sink.

5. Base plate

It covers any unnecessary holes in your existing sink or counter. If you're buying a new sink with the right number of holes, you won't need a base plate.

6. Supply hoses

The longer the hoses, the easier it will be to connect them to the water supply.

7. Counterweight

This helps the hose and spout retract properly.



WHERE TO SHOP

Whether you buy online or go local, we've got the inside info on the best and worst retailers.

Here's a surprising tidbit: The stores that sell the most appliances in the U.S.—Home Depot, Lowe's, Sears, and Walmart—aren't necessarily the ones customers like best. Our latest survey of more than 22,000 readers shows that *amazon.com* and local independent retailers meet or beat the big boys on selection and service.

Savvy shoppers rated Chicago-area Abt Electronics best overall for large appliances for the fourth year. Don't live near the Windy City? Abt ships anywhere within the lower 48 states and sells online from its site and on Amazon.

Online buying is growing fastest for small appliances: Roughly 25 percent were bought that way in 2013 compared with 16 percent in 2012. *Amazon.com* topped most

small-appliance retailers and outdid *QVC.com* for selection. Relatively low prices for both online retailers and better service this year from Amazon are probably part of that strong showing.

Here's how the stores rate on price, selection, and service based on almost 30,000 purchases.

Lowest prices: Think Best Buy and Costco. Big-box stores such as Home Depot and Lowe's offer one-stop shopping if you're buying lumber along with your fridge. But when it comes to the best deals, Best Buy beat them and matched both Abt Electronics and a regional player, HHGregg. Shopping for smaller stuff? No one matched Costco on price; the warehouse club beat Sam's Club, *amazon.com*, and *QVC.com*.

Best selection: Hit Abt, HHGregg, and Pacific Sales. For variety, none of the largest chains matched those three regional retailers for large appliances or *amazon.com* for small ones. But if you want to buy food with your food processor, you'll find more choices at Target than at Costco, Sam's Club, or Walmart.

Service and easy checkout: Shop the locals. It's hard to beat your neighborhood mom-and-pop retailer if you want attentive, knowledgeable salespeople. And when it comes to small appliances, our shoppers gave Kmart, Sam's Club, Target, and Walmart our lowest marks for service. Complaints included inexpert, hard-to-find sales help. Hate long checkout waits? Then consider skipping Sears.

Shopping tips for appliance stores

Haggle. Shoppers who asked for a lower price on a purchase typically saved \$100 on major appliances and \$50 on small ones. Here's a winning tactic from one of our Facebook followers: See whether you can buy a floor model or one that's

slightly blemished (but fully functional) for less. And try to get any fees for shipping, installation, and haul-away waived.

Skip extended warranties. Eighty-five percent of our large-appliance shoppers were

urged to buy one; P.C. Richard & Son, a New York-area regional chain, proved to be the pushiest. But our research shows that repairs during the extended-warranty period often cost about the same as the warranty. Here's a better

Boutique shopping...for appliances

Yes, you can buy a \$5,000 range at a big box store, or online, for that matter. But when you're making a sizeable investment in a kitchenful of appliances you might want a bit more personalized attention and expertise than a general retailer can offer. If so, consider shopping at an independent appliance store that specializes in high-end products. Often family-owned and -operated, these stores have a limited product line, which their sales staff typically knows inside and out—thanks to regular and ongoing training from the manufacturers whose products they sell. “Every day, we have sales reps from different companies come into our store to give our staff on-the-spot training sessions. If there's a new product, they'll walk us through every feature,” says Stephen Weiner, sales manager at Abt Electronics in Glenview, Ill.

That level of knowledge ensures that a salesperson can offer advice and help shoppers avoid potentially expensive mistakes. Weiner adds that the benefits of working with a high-end retailer don't stop once the appliance is purchased, though. His store—and others like his—offer ongoing service and maintenance, so you will be building a relationship with the retailer that could last the life of the appliance.



Abt Electronics' showroom boasts a Las Vegas-inspired atrium (above) and kitchen vignettes (below).



bet: Check our brand-repair Ratings, starting on page 44.

Compare prices online.

Most shoppers who checked prices before buying online or at a brick-and-mortar store got a better deal overall. Taking advantage of online coupons

and e-mail offers also helped them save.

Shop at a 'real' store.

One in three shoppers who bought a major appliance online checked it out at a walk-in store first—and then saved roughly \$75, on average.

But don't rule out walk-in stores when it comes to buying: All of the major ones in our survey offer “meet or beat” price policies. Stores may also sweeten the deal in other ways (including free shipping and installation).

Best all-around choices from our survey

Shoppers were relatively satisfied overall, but no retailer earned perfect marks across the board.

■ ABT ELECTRONICS

This Chicago-area store boasts an 80,000-square-foot showroom. It was the highest-rated store overall for sales of major appliances. Consumer Reports readers who responded to our survey praised it for the very good prices and excellent selection, service, quality, and other attributes.

■ INDEPENDENTS

Stand-alone retailers received some of the highest scores for major and small appliances. While only average for price and selection, the stores received top marks for service, checkout ease, installation, and other attributes.

■ AMAZON.COM

This large online retailer was among the top ones overall for small appliances. People who bought them there praised it for prices, selection, service, checkout ease, and shipping.

■ QVC.COM

The website for this TV shopping channel received above-average scores for prices among buyers of small appliances. It also scored well for product quality, service, and shipping, among other attributes.

■ COSTCO

This popular warehouse club scored excellent for small-appliance prices and was praised for its product quality and checkout ease. As with other warehouse clubs, you sacrifice selection and service for price.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Some companies excel at handling appliance woes, but many leave customers hanging in automated phone-menu limbo or worse.



Need help? Good luck. More and more, retailers are burying their phone numbers deep in their web pages and steering you to online FAQs. It's all about saving money—theirs, not yours.

Although recorded messages insist “your call is very important to us,” we’ve found that many companies are driving a wedge between themselves and their customers through poor use of technology

and inadequate training of staff.

In a nationwide survey, shoppers told us what they dislike most about today’s brand of care. We also crunched the numbers from our studies of 21 industries to identify the companies that were best and worst for customer service. And we asked retail experts for advice about the most effective ways for consumers to lodge complaints. Here are the high points of our findings.

Frustration runs high. Sixty-four percent of respondents said that during the previous 12 months they had left a store because service was poor, and 67 percent had hung up on customer service without having had their problem addressed.

Most callers want to reach an actual person. Seventy-one percent of survey respondents were “tremendously annoyed” when they couldn’t reach a human on the phone; 65 percent felt that same way about rude salespeople. And 56 percent felt that way about having to take multiple phone steps to reach the right place.

Differences in demographics become apparent. Our survey showed that women were more annoyed than men when they couldn’t reach a person by phone; men were especially annoyed by customer-service phone reps who pitched unrelated goods or services; people 50 and older were more annoyed than others by convoluted voice-messaging systems.

Face-to-face is out of favor. Only 16 percent of Americans prefer to deal with a customer-service problem in person. Twenty percent favor the phone; 2 percent, live chat. Fewer still prefer e-mail. Sixty percent of respondents said that their preferred method of contact depends on the nature of the problem.

Walmart and Sam’s Club win the booby prize. One or both were among the worst for customer service in eight industries, including appliances, electronics, cell phones, and supermarkets.

Getting results: How to rattle a company's cage

Sixty-one percent of Americans surveyed for an Arizona State University study said that complaining about a product or service was not worthwhile. But if you're not among that group, take advantage of the new tools consumers can use to express themselves. Internet forums can turn one person's headache into a corporate migraine. Most companies are on social networking sites so that they can monitor what's said about them—and they often respond to a concern before it can go viral. Bad news travels fast. According to the study, each dissatisfied complainant spreads the word to an average of about 18 people.

"Twitter has become the go-to for customer support," said Marsha Collier, author of "The Ultimate Online Customer Service Guide" (Wiley, 2011). "Some brands respond in seconds."

Some businesses are giving consumers a wider range of ways to reach them, offering toll-free numbers, e-mail query forms, and live chats with agents. Others have user communities, where they encourage customers to post questions and comments about their goods and services. Company representatives may even join the chat.

Dedicated sites like Yelp, which let customers rate businesses and sound off about experiences (and invite companies to respond), are another option. Here are more ways to solve a problem.



MAKE YOUR PITCH IN PERSON. "On the phone, we use only 45 percent of the communication tools we use in person," customer-service expert Emily Yellin said. Missing are subtleties that break down barriers—a smile or tone of voice.

BYPASS AUTOMATED MENUS. Websites such as *DialAHuman.com* and *GetHuman.com* list customer-service numbers and tell how to bypass automated prompts to reach a person. Another free service, LucyPhone, lets you avoid long waits on hold. You enter the company's name or phone number and give LucyPhone your phone number, and the service calls you back when a live representative is on the line.

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. Yours might be one of 100 requests a rep handles in a day. Getting mad won't help. If you realize the agent lacks the necessary authority, ask where to go for help.

KEEP A RECORD. Note when you called, the name and location of everyone you spoke with, how many times you were put on hold, and the responses you received. That way, if you need to follow up, you can say, "I spoke to John in your Chicago office at 12:20 and after a 30-minute wait he said he never heard of a problem like mine."

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL. If you get the runaround, tell the agent you want to "escalate" the status of your complaint. That's a guaranteed attention grabber because agents can be criticized for bumping too many problems upstairs.

CONTACT THE CEO'S OFFICE. "They want the problem solved before it reaches them," said Shep Hyken, a consultant who speaks to corporations about service. But when top execs hear from an unhappy consumer, they'll often ensure a response.

BE PERSISTENT. Repeat your story on social networking sites, if necessary. Companies can hide your comments on Facebook but not on Twitter. On Twitter, use hashtags to make your comments more easily searchable.

GIVE PRAISE. Thank a company for a good outcome, especially if you've griped publicly. And always be polite.

Who provides the best support?

Subscribers who reported on experiences with more than 21,000 appliances were much more satisfied when they called an independent repair shop than other choices, such as the manufacturer or retailer. The reports involved appliances serviced since January 2011 and overwhelmingly were for products readers had purchased themselves.

Though satisfaction was higher for independent repair shops, most outlets got average scores for solving customers' problems. LG was below average, and Frigidaire, Maytag, and Whirlpool got our lowest ratings.

Refrigerators and washing machines together accounted for about half of all appliances serviced.

We surveyed almost 1,000 consumers nationwide to find the customer-service

problems that infuriate people most. Respondents rated 12 practices on a scale of 0 (not annoying at all) to 10 (tremendously annoying). The inability to speak with a real person on the phone was especially irritating to women and respondents 50 and older. Women were also more likely to be annoyed by unapologetic employees, the need to wade through automated phone-menu prompts to get help, and an inability to find a salesperson in a store.

Men were more likely to be annoyed by customer-service sales pitches for unrelated goods and services. The youngest consumers in our survey, those 18 to 34, had the lowest tolerance for repair people who didn't show up on time. Thirty-five percent were tremendously annoyed by that situation.

Ratings

In order of reader score for support satisfaction.

Company	Reader score
	0 100
Independent local repair shop	82
Independent local retail store	76
Lowe's	71
Sears	69
Kenmore	68
GE	66
Samsung	65
Frigidaire	64
Maytag	63
KitchenAid	61
Whirlpool	61
LG	61

Source: Spring 2012 Appliance Support and Service survey. Differences of less than 7 points are not meaningful. Reader score reflects satisfaction with the service experience.

5 EASY UPDATES UNDER \$250

- p. 12 & 13, Cindy Black of Hello Kitchen, hellokitchen.net; inset, oval latch, rejuvenation.com; white drawers, brass hardware, Meredith Heron Design, meredithheron.com
- p. 14, David Wilkes Builders, davidwilkesbuilders.com/tarrytown
- p. 15, single pendant light, Kenroy Home at Target, target.com; Menlo Park pendants by Troy Lighting, troylightinglights.com; island, Charmean Neithart Interiors, charmean-neithart-interiors.com

COLOR THEORY

- p. 16, Zero Energy Design, zeroenergy.com
- p. 17, Sada Lewis, sadalewis.com
- p. 18, thewoodgraincottage.com

QUICK KITCHEN FIXES

- p. 20, LDa Architecture & Interiors, lda-architects.com

GREAT FOR GATHERING

- p. 25, Terracotta Properties, terracottaproperties.com
- p. 26, top left, Terracotta Properties, terracottaproperties.com; open space kitchen, Cuppett Architecture, cuppetchitects.com
- p. 27, mudroom, Pamela Singer Interior Design (pamelasingerdesign.com) for Morgan-Heller Associates, morgan-heller.com

LIGHTING

- p. 30, left, George Nelson Triple Bubble lamp, shophome.com; center, Bentwood wood slatted pendant, westelm.com; Burnside plug-in, rejuvenation.com
- p. 31, Sarah Stacey Interior Design, sarahstaceydesign.com
- p. 32, clockwise from top left: Nora Lighting, noralighting.com; Glomar Track Lighting at Home Depot, homedepot.com; Echo Wall Sconce, robertabbeylightingstore.com; Pottery Barn Fisherman's Indoor-Outdoor, potterybarn.com; semi-pendant, Design Within Reach, dwr.com; Sputnik Filament Chandelier, Restoration Hardware, restorationhardware.com
- p. 33, industrial, Northworks Architects and Planners, nwks.com; vintage, Stephane Chamard Agency,

stephanechamard.com; natural, All Modern, allmodern.com; geometric, DeRosa Builders, derosabuilders.com; Layers of Light, Charlie and Co. Design; charlieandcodesign.com

p. 35, Turan Designs, turandesigns.net

SLEEK & MODERN

- p. 36–39, Taylor Bryan Company, taylor-bryan.com

BUYING GUIDE**CABINETS**

- p. 47, Sicora Design/Build, sicora.com
- p. 49, top, Ikea, ikea.com; bottom, Omega Cabinets, omegacabinetry.com
- p. 50, top left, Plain & Fancy, plainfancycabinetry.com; Merillat cutting board kit, merillat.com; Masterbrand Diamond Base Trash and Recycling, masterbrand.com
- p. 51, Kraftmaid door fronts, kraftmaid.com; cabinet, Aristocraft, aristocraft.com

FLOORING

- Armstrong, armstrong.com
- Congoleum, congoeum.com
- Dupont, dupont.com
- EcoTimber Bamboo, ecotimber.com
- Forbo, forbo-flooring.com
- Lumber Liquidators, lumberliquidators.com
- Mannington, mannington.com
- Mohawk, mohawkflooring.com
- Mullican, mullicanflooring.com
- Natural Floors by USFloors, lowes.com
- Nova, novaflooring.com
- Pergo, pergo.com
- Project Source, lowes.com
- Quick-Step, us.quick-step.com
- Shaw, shawfloors.com
- Surface Source, surfacesource.net
- SwiftLock, swiftlocklaminat flooring.com
- Tarkett, tarkett.com
- Teragren, teragren.com
- The Woods Company, thewoodscompany.com
- TrafficMaster, trafficmasterflooring.net

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- Amana, amana.com
- Blomberg, blombergappliances.com
- Dacor, dacor.com
- DCS, dcsappliances.com
- Electrolux, electroluxappliances.com
- Fisher & Paykel, fisherpaykel.com
- Frigidaire, frigidaire.com

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Haier, haier.com

Hotpoint, hotpoint.com

Ikea, ikea.com

Jenn-Air, jennair.com

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KitchenAid, kitchenaid.com

Liebherr, liebherr-appliances.com

Maytag, maytag.com

Miele, mieleusa.com

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Sanyo, us.sanyo.com

Sub-Zero, subzero-wolf.com

Thermador, thermador.com

Viking, vikingrange.com

Whirlpool, whirlpool.com

Wolf, subzero-wolf.com

UNRATED PRODUCTS*Sink shopping**

- p. 127, top, Blanco Vision, blancoamerica.com; left center, Elkay Avado Work Bench, elkay.com; right center, Kohler Porto Fino, kohler.com; bottom, Blanco Cerana, blancoamerica.com
- p. 128 top right, Elkay top-mount, elkay.com; lower right, Swanstone Granite Nero, swanstoneproducts.com; lower left, Houzer Zero radius, houzersink.com
- p. 129, top, Kohler Hartland, kohler.com bottom left, Blanco One with utensils storage, blancoamerica.com

Faucet finder

- p. 130, Liz Schupanz Designs, lizschupdesigns.com
- p. 131, top, American Standard Portsmouth, americanstandard-us.com; center left, Kraus, kraususa.com

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